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PETTICOAT GOVERNMENT;

A NOVEL.

BY HENRY TROLLOPE.

INTRODUCED BY THE AUTHOR. WITH A NEW PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR.

PETTICOAT GOVERNMENT.

PARIS,

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10, RUE VIVIANNE, 10.

1870.

NO. 1.

PETITION GOVERNMENT

A NOVEL

BY MRS. TROTT

AND WITH A PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR

PETITION GOVERNMENT.

PARIS

AND IN AMERICA BY THE AUTHOR

1855

PETTICOAT GOVERNMENT;

A NOVEL.

BY MRS. TROLLOPE,

AUTHOR OF "OLD WORLD AND THE NEW", "YOUNG LOVE", ETC.

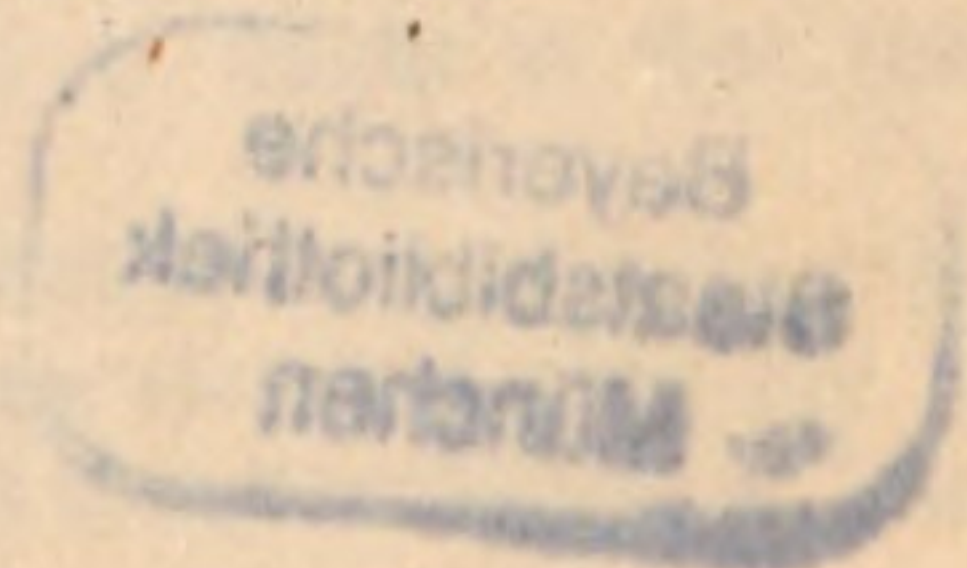


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PETTICOAT GOVERNMENT;

A NOVEL.

BY MRS. TROLLOPE.

CHAPTER I.

ABOUT a quarter of a century ago there resided in a cathedral town, which we will distinguish by the name of Westhampton—chiefly because we know of no town so called—a very respectable family of the name of Jenkyns. They lived in a house which, though not in the close, was very near it, and which, better still, was built very much in the same handsome substantial style as the prebendal houses.

This mansion had been in the possession of the Jenkyns' family for several successive generations, and during the whole of this period it had never been inhabited by any one who did not bear the name; a circumstance which, of course, greatly added to the respect in which the residence and its inhabitants were held, and this feeling was the stronger, perhaps, because the magnates of a cathedral town are, of necessity, not hereditary magnates.

It was generally understood that the family were originally from Wales, and had, as all the Westhampton townspeople strenuously declared, very excellent blood in their veins; an advantage also of which they were, of course, justly proud, but which nevertheless had not prevented the race from being bankers in the said town of Westhampton, from father to son, pretty nearly from the time that country banking was first established in these realms.

The race of Jenkyns had hitherto not been a very prolific race, for though there had never been wanting a David Jenkyns, Esquire, to succeed to the banking business whenever the preceding David Jenkyns, Esquire, had been removed by death, there had never been any one of them, since the time of their first settlement in Westhampton, who had been blessed with more than one son at the time of his death.

Neither were the daughters of the house very numerous, and of these the majority had died single, which may be accounted for by

the fact that every successive David Jenkyns, Esquire, banker of Westhampton, had been uniformly of opinion that they owed it to themselves, their name, and their bank, not to diminish their credit, or the solid funds which supported it, by bestowing any very tempting amount of fortune on the daughters of their race; and the consequence of this was that, though their family connexions had not greatly increased, the family property had never been lessened.

But, for some years before the time at which my narration begins, this regular succession of Westhampton Jenkynses was overthrown, and their bank extinguished by the want of a male heir.

The last David Jenkyns had married a beautiful young woman immediately upon the demise of his father, which took place when this son had attained the age of thirty-five years, and of this marriage four female Jenkynses were born, but that was all; no little David arrived to bless his grey hairs, and carry on his bank.

The regret occasioned by this was great; but the last male Jenkyns was a worthy sensible man, and neither tormented himself, his wife, nor his daughters on the subject. Yet, notwithstanding this peaceable disposition, he was not long-lived; departing in peace at the age of fifty-five.

He bequeathed to his wife four hundred a-year for her life, together with the use of the house which had been the scene of their one score years of peaceful union, and all that was contained in the said house in the way of plenishing. The rest of his property he left to be divided in equal portions between his four daughters, with the proviso, however, that if any one or more of them should remain single at the death of their mother, the house and plenishing should belong to them, to the exclusion of such as might at that time be married.

His widow survived him just twenty years, during which time she had seen her eldest and her youngest daughter married. But the

marriages were not greatly to her satisfaction, for, considering that both the young ladies were as lovely as she had been herself, and possessed moreover fortunes amounting to the respectable sum of ten thousand pounds each, she thought that they might have done better.

Penelope, the eldest, had in truth married as imprudently as it was well possible for a young lady to do, having bestowed her pretty self and her pretty fortune on her drawing-master, a very clever artist, and a very fascinating companion, but a singularly imprudent, yet by no means a worthless man. Though positively without a vice, and gifted with abounding talents of all kinds, he contrived somehow or other to get through rather more than half her property before he died, leaving her with one son, who was just old enough to have acquired his father's passionate love for art, as well as the habit of devoting pretty nearly all his hours of study to the cultivation of it. He was an enthusiastic musician, too, and this he likewise inherited from his father, as well as his magnificent dark eyes, his fascinating smile, and handsome form; but with all this, and a multitude of fine moral qualities to boot, this orphan son was an anxious treasure to his widowed mother, who, having been long resident at Rome, remained there for many years after her husband's death, with little or no intercourse with her offended family.

The marriage of Judith, the youngest of Mrs. Jenkyns' four daughters, was less unfortunate, though, at the time it was formed, it was far from appearing prudent, for the young man was on the eve of his departure for India, with very little besides a cadet's commission in the Company's service by way of a provision for himself and his beautiful wife. In this case, however, the marriage did not take place by stealth, like that of the elder sister, and the pretty Judith's fortune was settled upon herself and her offspring. Moreover, the young man lived long enough to attain the rank of Colonel, having distinguished himself on more than one occasion as a gallant soldier. He had likewise enjoyed the still more solid advantage of obtaining so profitable a government contract as enabled him, in a few years, to realise a very considerable sum of money; and then he died, poor man, just when he was arranging his affairs in such a manner as might enable him to revisit Europe with his wife and family.

Colonel Maitland left three children; but scarcely had his widow sufficiently recovered

from the shock occasioned by his sudden death to permit her to renew the preparations for her homeward voyage, than her eldest child, a son, and her youngest child, a daughter, were seized with cholera, which carried them off in a few hours. Judith, a girl about sixteen, escaped the fatal malady by being on a visit to some distant friends, and it was some weeks before her mother thought it safe to recall her. But when she came at last, it was only to receive the last sigh of that broken-hearted mother whose health had failed even before that of her husband, and who had no strength to bear the load of sorrow that had fallen on her.

By the will of her father the young Judith, as his sole heiress, inherited all the property he left, as well as the ten thousand pounds settled upon her mother; and knowing little, and caring less, about anything that was likely to happen to her for the future, the weeping orphan was shipped off to England to be made a ward in Chancery, with a fortune somewhat above forty thousand pounds, and a sort of testamentary letter from her poor mother to her two maiden sisters, entreating them to apply to the proper authorities for permission to take the personal charge of the young heiress, and to supply to her the place of the parents, the brother, and the sister she had so suddenly lost.

CHAPTER II.

WHILE these events occurred to the two married daughters of the Jenkyns family, the two spinster sisters of the same respectable race had passed the interval with much less of adventure, and much less apparent change of condition; but although they were still Miss Barbara Jenkyns, and Miss Elfreda Jenkyns, as they had been at the time of their father's decease, they had nevertheless passed through a variety of quiet little transitions which had brought them to a condition as little resembling that in which his death had left them, as if, among other changes, they had changed their names also.

Whether it be the natural sequence of cause and effect, or the result of a special dispensation of Providence, may be considered, perhaps, as a matter of doubt; but it is, speaking generally, an admitted fact that in a family of several daughters, those who are considered as the beauties among them are less inclined to be studious than those who are considered as not beauties.

This was very decidedly the case in the

Jenkyns family. The eldest and the youngest daughters were very pretty girls, and though they were neither of them particularly silly, or particularly coquettish, they certainly had, somehow or other, a vast deal more of visiting dress, and visiting acquaintance, to attend to than their plainer sisters.

Miss Barbara Jenkyns, the second daughter, being a quick-sighted discerning young lady, was not yet twenty years old when she discovered that the officers never, or very rarely, asked her to dance; for even in those peaceful days there was generally a small detachment of military quartered in the commodious barracks of Westhampton. She observed, also, that at the archery meetings for which the neighbourhood was particularly celebrated, some reason or other was always found why it would be more convenient for her eldest sister, or her youngest sister, or both of them, to belong to the set that were to wear the uniform, etc., etc., etc., than either her sister Elfreda or herself. Nor was Miss Elfreda, the third sister, at all less quick in making the same sort of discoveries; and not long after the death of their father they talked the matter over together, and their two heads conjointly were quite equal to the task of discovering the why and the wherefore of these peculiarities.

"The fact is," observed Miss Barbara, "that both Penelope and Judith are what is called regular beauties; and you may take my word for it, Elfreda, there is not a greater bore in the world than the having a regular beauty belonging to you. I do not believe that I am particularly ugly, because mamma always says I have such a good nose. You, Elfreda, have not any one good feature in your face, and therefore, of course, I suppose you are particularly ugly. However, there is nobody will deny, I think, that we are both of us ten thousand times cleverer than they are. And, moreover, you and I know, if nobody else happens to remember it, that this beautiful large house, and every thing in it, is to belong, after mamma's death, to whichever of us continues to remain single. And with ten thousand pounds a-piece, I cannot but think that I, for instance, with my ecclesiastical information, and my high principles upon church and state, you know, and all that sort of thing, I cannot but think it will be strange if I do not make myself count for somebody, in such a place as this. As to the officers, I don't care one single straw for the whole set of them! A parcel of idiots, that

are here to-day, and gone to-morrow!—I would rather have a good long talk, or a rubber of whist either, with the very ugliest old prebend of the whole set, than with the finest red-coat of them all."

To all which Miss Elfreda replied with equal quickness and sagacity:—

"If I am uglier than you, sister Barbara," she said, "so much the better for me; for the uglier I am, the better my chance of being let alone and permitted to remain as I am, and so of going half-and-half shares in the house with you. But you seem to forget my pretty feet, my dear. Mamma says I have the best legs and feet of the whole family. However, I don't want any body to fall in love with my legs and feet, not I, for I should not like to shape my intellect so as to please any man. I would not marry one of the clerical set if all their wives were in heaven to-morrow, and I had first choice of the bishop, dean, prebends, and minor canons, with the singing men into the bargain. And as to the red-coats, I never saw one yet that I liked well enough to give up my fortune to amuse him, instead of spending it myself. However, Barbara, if it really should happen that we two are left in the possession of this house and all it contains, there will be no occasion, you know, for us both to be always living in it. I am quite ready to allow *your* superiority to the beauties in all intellectual matters, and I don't suppose you will deny mine. Upon my honour I don't believe that they, either of them, know the difference between the occiput and the frontal sinus, any more than the cook-maid or the footman. And as to the distinction of races, and all the immensely important doctrines connected with it, I doubt if they could comprehend the very simplest phrase that could be uttered on the subject."

"Likely enough!" responded Miss Barbara. "In fact, they neither of them seem to me to comprehend any thing beyond the most becoming way of putting on a bonnet, or arranging a scarf. It is really pitiable! Heaven knows I do not envy their beauty, and I should be sorry to think that you did, either; though I can't say that I think your wearing smaller shoes than the rest of us is likely to make much difference."

"Never mind my small shoes, Barbara," returned her sister with a smile, which, if rightly interpreted, might have been found to display the conviction of the small-footed sister that her advantage in this particular

branch of beauty *was* minded, and very much minded, by the rest of the family. "Never mind my small feet; they can't have any thing to do, you know, with what I was saying about the house. There would be no occasion, I suppose, for us both to live here always? I am sure there is no such clause as that in my father's will. London is the only fitting residence for a person so devoted to science as I am, and I don't think I shall ever be happy any where else. We could divide the value of the house, you know, without my living in it."

"We can settle all that when the time comes," replied the very sensible Miss Barbara; and for several years no more was said on the subject, though it may be that it was often in the thoughts of both.

But, though not very speedily, this time came at last, and then the discussion was renewed, and the settlement of the question appeared to involve some difficulties.

At the time of Mrs. Jenkyns' death Miss Barbara had attained the mature age of forty-three, and her sister Elfreda was two years her junior. Miss Barbara, or more properly speaking, Miss Jenkyns, gave it as her opinion that the best thing they could do would be to continue to live together in the commodious mansion which the thoughtful kindness of their good father had provided for them.

The two sisters were at this time each of them in possession of rather more than fifteen thousand pounds, the respective share of their mother's settlement, together with their own savings during the twenty years which had elapsed since the death of their father, amounting together to this sum. And the income of this, as Miss Jenkyns the elder very judiciously observed, must and ought to be fully sufficient to enable them to continue in the paternal mansion with perfect ease and comfort. But on this point Miss Elfreda most completely differed from her, and with a sturdiness of purpose not likely to be overcome.

It was not, however, because she really anticipated any pecuniary difficulties that Miss Elfreda objected to this plan, for she was herself an excellent manager, and well knew that her sister was so likewise; but the "living together" in the old-world ecclesiastical county town which had hitherto been their residence accorded not in any way with either her wishes or intentions. She felt that she was not born for such an existence as that.

"I hope we are not going to quarrel about our poor dear father's will," said the younger sister, "for the doing so could by no possibility do us any good, but might very likely bring us eventually to absolute penury; for I am quite determined that I will try your right to make me live here in a court of law, Miss Jenkyns, before I yield to it," was her reply to her sister's proposal.

"Very well, Miss Elfreda; then let the law decide," returned the elder. "The intention of the good and wise testator," she added, "is obvious. He meant that the respectable house in which we were born, and the venerable city in which we were bred, should be our safeguard and protection through life, in case we remained single; and it never entered his head, dear blessed man! that one of his children should pay rent to another of them, for permission to live in the house that it was his express purpose to bestow upon her as a dwelling without her paying any rent at all for it. It must be queer logic that would prove this, I think."

"You have stated your case strongly, and cleverly enough, Miss Jenkyns, and it gives me pleasure to hear you," replied her sister; "for it would be really too mortifying if the conviction were forced upon me that all my race were as completely idiots as Penelope and Judith have shown themselves. So you must not suppose that I have any intention whatever to quarrel with you. The folly of our quarrelling would indeed be preposterous. Nothing can be more agreeable than our prospects for the future, if we do not mar them by some folly of our own. My purpose is to establish myself in comfortable lady-like lodgings in London, in a quarter not so fashionable as to make every inch of space important, nor yet so out of the way as to produce an obstacle to the easy visitings of my acquaintance. When thus established, I shall have much pleasure in receiving you as a visitor during the cold winter months—or weeks, during which you might find Westhampton dirty and dreary; and, when London becomes dull and dusty, I shall have great satisfaction in returning your visit. But I have no intention, while pursuing this very rational plan of existence, to commit the egregious folly of giving up my share of the property which was expressly left by our father for the consolation of such members of his family as did not happen to obtain the much-vaunted felicity of matrimonial love and protection. This is *my* case, sister Bar-

bara. But, as a proof of my sisterly confidence and affection, I will add that I have already had half an hour's perfectly unreserved conversation with our respected friend Mr. Price, who, after having read the clause in my father's will which we are now discussing, gave it as his professional opinion that if you went to law with me on the point you would not have a leg to stand upon, however large your feet may be. It seems highly probable, he says, that it was the project of our excellent father that such of his daughters as remained single should continue to reside together in the family mansion at Westhampton; but, inasmuch as his last will and testament makes no mention whatever of such an arrangement as making a *condition*, upon which alone the single daughters can claim the benefit of the bequest, it becomes evident that we must, in some way or other, divide it."

Miss Barbara Jenkyns paid precisely such a degree of attention to this statement as proved that her intellectual faculties deserved the praise which her sister had bestowed upon them. She remained silent for a minute or two; then bowed her head, and said, "You, too, have stated your case clearly, Elfreda. I agree with you entirely in your opinion that there would be great folly in our quarrelling; and, in my judgment, there would be great sin also; we will hope, therefore, that there is no likelihood that we *should* quarrel. But, as you have had the advantage of a friend's advice and I have not, we do not at this moment stand upon equal ground; for which reason I shall beg to be allowed two or three days,—let us say a week, if you please,—before I give you my final answer. You cannot object to this?"

"Nothing can be more reasonable," returned Miss Elfreda. This was her only reply, as she rose to leave the room in which this conference had taken place; but ere she closed the door, after passing through it, she gave a little Parthian hint in these words, accompanied by a smile which, if it did not absolutely tip the dart with venom, very decidedly added to the sharpness of its point.

"I hope it will not be *very* long before I hear of Dr. Wroughtley's being admitted to the study, Miss Barbara, for, to say truth, I am anxious to have this question settled at once."

Had there been no truth in the insinuation conveyed by these words, and the smile which accompanied them, Miss Barbara Jenkyns

would not have coloured so vehemently; neither would she have tossed back the sable streamers of her cap with a movement expressive at once of so much indignation and contempt; however, she very soon recovered herself, for there was too much of conscious superiority about her (to say nothing of her conscious rectitude) for any such idly quizzing looks and words to annoy her much.

Her somewhat long visage speedily recovered its ordinary hue, and her crape lappets were sedately and deliberately deposited behind her shoulders, as she sat down and wrote the following note:—

"My dear Doctor,—Perhaps, if not better engaged, you will give us the pleasure of your company this evening. I think I shall be able to get Mr. and Mrs. Eccles to join our rubber, and partake of a brace of birds afterwards, which have just reached us in very good order. But, if you do us the favour of coming, I must beg of you to let William show you into the study before you make your appearance in the drawing-room. I will not detain you there long, but I greatly wish for your opinion upon a subject of some importance.

"Yours, very sincerely,

"BARBARA JENKYNs."

The doctor thus addressed, not being better engaged, obeyed the summons, and was ushered, by the well-instructed William, into the study exactly half an hour before the time at which the *little* whist parties of Westhampton were accustomed to assemble.

CHAPTER III.

DR. WROUGHTLEY had begun his professional life as curate of a small parish in the north of England. But, though a small parish, it was a rich rectory, and had, moreover, a very good house upon it; but the rector, who was honourable as well as reverend, found the air too keen for his lungs, and he was, therefore, indulged with a pretty nearly unlimited licence to reside abroad. Young Mr. Wroughtley, however, supplied his place extremely well, having a good-natured nod and smile for every poor body in the parish, and a very tolerable stock of college stories for the Lord of the Manor, with whom he faithfully dined, shot, played whist, and smoked a cigar, whenever he was invited to do so during the thirty years that he continued to hold the curacy.

At the end of that time, the honourable

and reverend rector fell a victim at last to the delicate state of his lungs, and a new incumbent arrived, with the intention of serving his own church, and living in his own house.

Moreover, the new rector, after a few inquiries made, became of opinion, that the parish being so very small a one, he could do the whole duty of it himself, and the more easily as he never shot, was but a rare diner-out, and had never smoked a cigar in his life. The curate, therefore, was dismissed at rather short notice, but with a year's salary.

But the Lord of the Manor was very greatly displeased at his being dismissed at all; the change indeed was disagreeable to him in many ways. The late curate had some particularly clever high-bred dogs, which were always at the Squire's service, but now the dogs were dismissed as well as the curate; nor did the opening the church for the performance of divine service three days in the week, instead of one, appear to afford any consolation to the Squire for the closing the dog-kennel. In short, the Lord of the Manor was very angry, and, luckily for Mr. Wroughtley, he determined to revenge himself upon the new rector, by proving that he had influence enough to prevent a friend he valued from being "rolled in the mire," (it was thus he described the curate's dismissal,) by any fanatical high priest in the world.

This threat was put in execution by his using his interest with a near relation, who was in the Cabinet, for the appointment of his old companion to a stall; and within six months afterwards the dismissed curate had become Dr. Wroughtley, and Prebend of Westhampton.

It is not necessary to trace minutely the history of the friendship which existed between this amiable dignitary and his estimable neighbour, Miss Barbara Jenkyns.

From the very first year of his appointment, Miss Barbara had felt that his arrival was an important and most agreeable addition to the society of "the Close." This impression had never worn out, but, on the contrary, had rather gone on increasing from year to year, till he had become, in her estimation, not only the most valuable member of the reverend, and every way admirable, circle to which he belonged, but decidedly worth at least any three others that could have been named among their most intimate friends.

And here let me beg leave to observe, that

if any light jesting be indulged in at the expense of Miss Barbara, under the supposition that she was, or ever had been, in love (as it is called) with the Rev. Dr. Wroughtley, Prebend of Westhampton, the jester so jesting will only expose herself, or himself, to the imputation of utter incapacity in the study of human nature through all its vast and beautiful varieties.

Miss Barbara Jenkyns was not in love with Dr. Wroughtley; she had no such stuff in her thoughts. She felt as certain, or very nearly as certain, that Dr. Wroughtley never would marry, as that her sister, Elfreda, never would marry; and it would have been scarcely possible in her estimation to have made assurance more sure than that.

No; Miss Barbara was not in love with Dr. Wroughtley; for she did not believe in the least degree, or at any rate in any degree of which she was herself conscious, that she should ever have it in her power to marry him,—and this, in a mind so thoroughly well regulated as hers, very fully justifies the assertion that she was not in love with him.

Nevertheless, there is another fact equally indisputable, and it is one that deserves attention, inasmuch as it throws a curious light upon the workings of the human mind. Dr. Wroughtley was still a bachelor, and, had he not been a bachelor, Miss Barbara Jenkyns' feelings towards him would never have been of the exclusive nature that they certainly were.

The young and giddy, the unthinking, or the unphilosophical, may perhaps fancy that they discover a discrepancy between these two statements; but it is not so. In a society constituted like that of Westhampton, or in truth in any other where the same set continue long together in frequent social intercourse, a gentleman so circumstanced, that is to say, a bachelor of easy fortune, social habits, and agreeable manners, is *sure* of becoming, in the eyes of all the ladies of his circle, a person of more importance than any other who is not a bachelor, even though they may, one and all, conform to and proclaim the belief that "he is not the least in the world likely to marry."

There are so many little things in which a bachelor's freedom from all domestic ties and restraints enables him to be so "perfect a treasure" to all the ladies of his acquaintance!—And the man who knows how to make the most of this may keep up his value in every party in which he mixes, till he really re-

nounces his success because he is weary of it.

Gentlemen of his own standing in life, as to age, may doubtless also make themselves of consequence in society, even though they are married; for they may give dinners, and balls, and card parties, and may, with great amenity, patronise races and pic-nics, and considerately invite young officers, barristers, and juvenile clergymen, whenever they come in their way.

But this rarely gives much pleasure, or is of any serious importance, save to the younger part of the female population, whose gay little hearts are ready to flutter at a moment's notice, and become tranquil again as suddenly if necessary, without being very much the worse for the emotion. But to that portion of the fair sex who have passed their "piping days" without entering the sobering pale of matrimony, the "confirmed bachelor" is by far a more interesting member of society than the most consequential married man can be.

These ladies, nevertheless, are not in love. —It would be uncivil, irreverend, and very idle to say they were; but so much benignity "doth hedge" a bachelor, that their own natures seem to soften as they approach one who has proved his full right to the interesting title by a sufficiently long avoidance of the marriage yoke.

I have made rather a long digression, in order fully to explain the nature of Miss Barbara Jenkyns' friendship for Dr. Wroughtley, and I now flatter myself that my readers are in no danger of mistaking her. It is true that she did not, as we have already seen, always escape the sarcastic allusions of her sister Elfreda on the subject. But she was used to this, and did not mind it much. She had the comfort of knowing that Dr. Wroughtley himself did not mistake her; and it was for this reason that she now, as ever, permitted him to see that she considered his opinion as more valuable to her than that of any other individual of her acquaintance.

What his feelings were respecting Miss Barbara will be easily divined as the narrative proceeds.

"This is very kind of you, my dear Doctor!" said Miss Barbara, as soon as the door of the study was shut upon them by the respectful and scarcely-at-all-quizzing William, "very kind indeed!"

"How could any man be anything but kind to so charming a lady as Miss Barbara Jen-

kyns?" returned the worthy prebend, taking her very cordially by the hand, and not relinquishing the said hand till he had placed her commodiously in a chair close beside the fire (for it was a very cold November evening); and this chair was at no great distance from the doctor's well-known favorite stuffed friend, which ever stood with open arms, as if ready to receive him, upon the thick Turkey hearth-rug. And the fire now burnt brightly, for Miss Barbara knew that her reverend friend hated a dull-looking fire.

"But upon my word, Doctor, it is something more than kindness that I want now!" said Miss Barbara.

The very slightest twitch in the world of the doctor's left eyebrow might have been perceived by any one who had happened at that moment to be anxiously examining his features. The off corner of this left eyebrow descended a little, and the left corner of the mouth was a little elevated, as if to meet it, while at the same instant the eye that divided them was a little, a very little contracted. The whole manœuvre was instantaneous, and perhaps merely habitual; but it might have been mistaken by an ill-natured or irreverend person, as indicating a propensity to a sort of merry wink, which would have been as unworthy of a prebend as of a friend.

"Well! Tell me all about it," he replied, seizing with friendly familiarity the poker, in order to make the fire brighter still. "What can I do for you?"

"Advise me, Dr. Wroughtley! That is what you must do for me," replied Miss Barbara.

"And on what subject, Miss Barbara?" he returned, warming his extended palms; and then adding, with an air that was perhaps a little too indifferent, "but tell me, first, who have you got to make up our rubber to-night?"

"No, my dear Doctor, I can't tell you first, I will tell you afterwards; and when you hear what I have got to say, I am sure you will confess that it ought to be attended to first. It is about myself, Dr. Wroughtley, and my sister Elfreda."

The doctor looked solemn, but nevertheless he raised one of his newly warmed hands to his chin and mouth as if to comfort them, and said, after the interval of a few seconds, "Let me hear, let me hear, Miss Barbara."

The reader shall be spared the recapitulation of the late Mr. Jenkyns' will, which followed, because he is sufficiently acquainted

with it already. But to Dr. Wroughtley the particulars of it were new, and he listened to it with great attention.

"A very sensible proper will, Miss Barbara," he said, as soon as she had concluded her statement of its contents; "and to me you will readily believe that it is particularly agreeable, because it seems to assure me of the continued residence among us of valued neighbours, who have long been considered by the whole Close as if they were part and parcel of it."

"You are very kind to say so, my dear sir," replied the lady, this time arranging her crape lappets in two decorously straight lines in front of each shoulder; "but I am truly sorry to say," she continued, "that there has been a difficulty raised by my sister Elfreda, which may make a very great difference as to that. She says now, Doctor, that she hates the place! Just fancy any one who has been born and bred in Westhampton, and lived all her life in the society of the Close, saying that she hated the place, and would not remain in it one hour longer than she could help!"

"If *you* had said such a thing, Miss Barbara," replied the doctor, "I certainly should have been very much shocked at it. But God has seen fit to make his creatures exceedingly different one from another, and, therefore, we have no right, you know, to complain of that. But I hope you are not going on to tell me that you are thinking of leaving Westhampton?"

"Indeed, Doctor Wroughtley, if there were that to tell, I must have got some other person to undertake the task, for I should not have sufficient strength to announce it myself," she replied. And here there was a pause in the conversation, for Miss Barbara found herself under the necessity of using her pocket handkerchief. But she presently recovered herself, and went on.

"No! If the worst comes to the very worst, I will still live here, if I live at all. But it really is enough to break one's heart, and one's constitution too, to hear a person talk like Elfreda does! *DRONES*, my dear Doctor, is her favourite term when speaking of the distinguished society to which we have so long had the honour and happiness of being admitted, while *Stars* and *Lights* are the words she uses when alluding to the heterogeneous tribe with whom she openly declares it is her purpose to associate in London. Is not this terrible?"

"Very," replied the doctor, rather solemnly. "Nevertheless, if I were you, my dear Miss Jenkyns, I don't think I should trouble myself much about it. I do not very clearly see what harm it will do you."

"Certainly not, Dr. Wroughtley, certainly not," returned Miss Barbara. "Her absurd and truly vulgar taste, as regards society, cannot in any way affect me, unless, indeed, it were with a Christian-like feeling of pity. No, my good friend, that is not the point on which I wish to consult you. My sister Elfreda says, Dr. Wroughtley, that under my father's will she has a right to claim half the value of the house and every thing in it; and she proposes to take this value in the form of *rent* from me. Now I want you to tell me whether you think it would be wisest for me to agree to this, bringing her to the most reasonable terms I can, or to dispute the point in a court of law?"

"Dispute the point in a court of law!" cried the doctor, rising with sudden animation from his chair. "No, no, no, no! Miss Barbara Jenkyns. Ten thousand times **NO!**"

"Thank you, Doctor, thank you truly for the kind interest you take in the question. I think myself that it would be better to avoid a law-suit if possible."

"I think it would, Miss Barbara," was the rejoinder. "And now tell me, my dear lady, who have you got to make up our rubber? Not more than one gentleman, I hope? Three men would make two partridges look very much ashamed of themselves. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, I do indeed, Doctor!" returned Miss Barbara, with the well-pleased smile with which she always welcomed every little indication of particularly marked confidence and intimacy bestowed upon her by the amiable prebend. "But I have taken care of that," she added. "It is the Eccleses that are coming, as I told you in my note."

"Good!" replied the doctor, blithely rubbing his hands, and making a step or two towards the door. "If Eccles were fifty times a minor canon I would give my vote for him in preference to almost any man I know at a small supper and a steady rubber. And as to his wife, you know, she not only plays whist as well as her husband, but she is content to live upon plum-cake and Madeira. So she is never in anybody's way, whether cutting at the whist or the supper table."

"Oh! how droll you are! Nothing ever escapes you!" said Miss Jenkyns, following him to the door.

"At any rate *you* must not escape me, Miss Barbara," said he, gallantly presenting his arm, "for I intend to do myself the honour of leading you to the drawing-room. But let me say a word in your ear, my good lady, before we open the door. There is no sort of occasion, you know, to tell your sister Elfreda that my advice is that you should have the property valued, and pay her the half of the valuation to the uttermost farthing rather than go to law about it. There is no occasion to tell her that. You may just mention to her that I said the going to law would be sure to put the whole value of the property, and perhaps a little more, into the pockets of the lawyers. This may frighten her a little, perhaps, and lead her to be moderate in her demands. Nay, it might not be amiss, for a day or two, to make her believe that, notwithstanding all I had said about the danger, you had yourself rather a fancy for trying the question. Do you understand me, Miss Barbara?"

"Perfectly!" replied the lady, with a little pressure upon the gentleman's arm, which seemed to pledge her acceptance of his advice, as well as her comprehension of it. And then they went up into the drawing-room.

CHAPTER IV.

It is not necessary to follow the efforts of the two sisters to settle this affair satisfactorily. Let it suffice to say that it was settled, and very fairly; the annual value of the mansion having been submitted to a valuation and Miss Barbara covenanting to pay her sister Elfreda annually the half of that sum, amounting to 33*l*. The plate and linen were equitably divided between them, and the elder sister agreed to give, and the younger sister agreed to take, two hundred pounds in full of all demands upon the rest of the plenishing, books included, none of them being of the style, tone, taste, or age, approved and appreciated by Miss Elfreda.

This really important business was not only soon settled, but the arrangements subsequent upon it were adopted with such hearty good will by both the parties concerned, that before the venerable widow Jenkyns had been consigned above three months to the family vault, her daughters Barbara and Elfreda had divided themselves by a distance of nearly a hundred miles.

But although this transaction was thus speedily brought to a conclusion between the two sisters, nothing followed from it which could justify any suspicion that the feelings upon which they had acted had been hastily conceived, or were at all likely to produce, on either side, anything like regret or repentance. On the contrary, they both commenced their new manner of life in a way so perfectly conformable to all their foregone plans and projects, that it was very clear they were both of them profiting by the meditations and resolutions of many by-gone years.

Miss Jenkins was a great deal too prudent to begin her solitary reign by the expenditure of any ready cash in refreshing, or renewing, any of the fading decorations of her respectable but rather antiquated mansion. She was not at all disposed to forget the fact that she had already made away with a considerable sum in order to obtain the undisputed possession of all that it contained, and after having given a long morning to an exact examination of her finances, and ascertained to a fraction what her annual income would now be, she came to the very wise resolution of not spending a single shilling either in paint, paper, carpets, or curtains, till she had contrived to save the same from her current expenditure.

Then followed an accurate examination of every room in the house, and of every article of furniture it contained; and the result was another resolution to devote herself, and her two maid servants, to the task of reparation, till every room which she intended to inhabit, or use in any way, was in a state of as perfect repair as the needle and shears, the brushes and brooms, the soap and water at her command could make it.

This done, her next attention was given to the formation of her future establishment. And on this point, much as she had heretofore meditated, she had not yet made up her mind. A very steady and somewhat elderly footman, an excellent cook, and a very active clever housemaid, had formed the executive of the late mistress of the mansion, and it would have been difficult to find a better-ordered household; but Miss Barbara remembered that the funds which had supported it had been greatly reduced, and, moreover, that one lady ought not to require as many servants as three, so that it was speedily decided in her well-ordered mind that one of her three domestics must be discharged. The difficulty lay in the question of which

should be. And this difficulty was of no light nature. That the large handsome house-door, which had been opened through many generations by a neatly-liveried serving man, should henceforward display, as it retreated before the Prebends and the Prebends' ladies, the undignified form of a housemaid, was a very painful idea to Miss Barbara. The alternative was parting with the cook; and to this the prudent inclination of the meditative mistress would decidedly have led her, had it not been for the recollection of the pleasant, cheerful, cheering gusto with which her honoured friend Dr. Wroughtley was wont to laud the bread sauce and the sweet sauce, the scalloped oysters and the lobster salads, by which the social little parties which for many years past had constituted the great delight of her existence had ever and always been most particularly distinguished at their house.

At length, however, it struck her that she might herself be a very important auxiliary, in all such matters; the maid of all work it would be necessary to install in the joint places of her present handmaidens; whereas, in the article of opening the door, announcing the company, handing the tea, and waiting at the supper-table, she could do herself no service at all.

This consideration decided the question. The cook and housemaid were dismissed, William was retained, and a niece of his, very judiciously chosen to supply their places, preventing thereby any little grumblings on his part, which might otherwise have been troublesome.

The morning of the first day upon which Miss Barbara invited a party after the departure of the cook was passed by her in considerable anxiety, and considerable activity also. It took her some time to decide of what the supper should consist, upon which the first experiment was to be made; at length she fixed upon a lobster salad, because she could prepare it entirely herself.

It was the custom, in that comfort-loving cathedral city, whenever a party met together for the sole purpose of amusing themselves without any intention of display, to lay the little supper-table (an old-fashioned indulgence found absolutely necessary where people play whist till midnight) in the drawing-room, partly to prevent the unpleasant sort of chill which, during the greater part of the English year, accompanies the passing from one room to another,

and partly to save very precious time all the year round.

And on the present occasion the little supper-table was laid exactly as it ought to have been (for William laid it), and no sooner did he announce that it was ready, than the victors and the vanquished, all hungry alike, uttered in chorus a cheerful "Just in right time," for their sixth rubber was that moment finished.

"What are you going to give us, Miss Barbara?" said the chartered Dr. Wroughtley, who knew that he might ask the question without any fear of offending.

"Lobster salad, my dear sir. I know that is a favourite dish with you."

And Miss Barbara said this cheerfully, for in her heart of hearts she knew that the lobster was a fine lobster, and her conscience told her, moreover, that a more carefully-skilful union of various flavours, in order to produce an exquisite sauce, had never been amalgamated since the luxurious fashion of eating lobsters in salad began.

The well-pleased quartette removed themselves from one four-seated table to the other, and their eight eyes were all simultaneously directed to the well-known and liberal-sized salad-bowl, in which the learnedly concocted salads of the Jenkyns family had been prepared for the last dozen years. But, alas! of all those eight eyes there was not one which did not withdraw itself with more or less of a disappointed expression. There were the nicely selected pale-tinted lettuce hearts as heretofore, and as heretofore glowed forth, athwart their delicate verdure, the coral-tinted morsels of the fish. Then why did each critical eye droop mournfully? Alas! the cause was but too manifest. Where was the delicious crispness of that lettuce gone? —that fresh aspect of elasticity, that sparkling brightness, which looked as if but half an instant had elapsed since the dew-drops had been shaken from it? Gone! Gone for ever! The enticing dimples that ought to have succeeded to those dewy tears were changed to flaccid flatness! The bright pale green, too, had faded to the dull tint of a cabbage, while the graceful bowl itself, instead of daintily encircling the enticing mass with just ample room and verge enough to avoid all danger of crushing it, even though filled to the very brim, now looked as if so utterly ashamed of the business assigned to it, as to have stretched itself beyond its usual size in order to let the whole of the

limp compound sink down, and so get out of sight.

It has been said by short-sighted half-observers, that we are all inclined to view our own productions with partiality; but the reverse of this is very often the case, and most assuredly it was so on this occasion with respect to the unfortunate Miss Jenkyns. It is true that Dr. Wroughtley was disappointed, and so was Mr. Eccles, and so even was Mrs. Eccles also, for Miss Jenkyns had not thought it necessary to buy a cake for her, because every body in the world liked lobster salad. But their disappointment was joy and gladness compared to that of Miss Barbara. She felt that she had placed herself there in double trust—as hostess and as cook, both strong against such a deed as she had now perpetrated. And most bitterly, good lady, did she reproach herself! It was, as she felt, so completely her own fault—such thoughtlessness!—such absence of all consideration!

Two sources of consolation, however, happily suggested themselves. The one was, that this was her first experiment, and that she should have both time and opportunity for improvement. And the other was, for the moment perhaps, more soothing still. She remembered that Dr. Wroughtley had won four rubbers out of the six they had played, and she felt a comforting conviction that he would not feel altogether disgusted with his evening, notwithstanding her unfortunate blunder.

But Miss Barbara deceived herself lamentably, if she supposed that a lady who wishes to entertain satisfactorily an individual so distinguished, and so distinguishing, as Dr. Wroughtley could discard a good cook with impunity.

The winter was now at its height, and woodcocks in their highest perfection. No commentary need be made upon what the feelings of Miss Jenkyns must have been on opening a little basket sent to her by the Dean, and discovering therein three woodcocks. Their long bills seemed to shoot themselves up towards her gazing eyes, like rays of sunshine. She smiled in the face of her faithful William with delight, placed a shilling in his hand to be given to the Dean's messenger, and then threw herself back in her chair to meditate upon the best manner of making use of her treasure.

The time had been when the idea of a snug little clerical dinner would have been sug-

gested by such an acquisition, but Miss Jenkyns was too sensible a woman to permit herself to dwell upon such a thought for a moment—not only had she lost her cook, but she remembered that when all her port wine was gone, it would not be so easy for her to renew her stock, as it had been for her departed mother. So she shook back her lappets, and drove the dangerous idea from her mind, without permitting herself to dwell upon it for a moment.

What then should she do with her woodcocks? Her spirits were at that moment in a state of too much exhilaration to permit her dwelling painfully upon the deficiencies of her cook; she only remembered Dr. Wroughtley's openly avowed partiality to that favoured portion of the winged creation, and speedily determined that, as he was as partial to small supper parties as to plump woodcocks, the invaluable Mr. and Mrs. Eccles should be again invited; that the trussing, the spitting, and the bread-sauce should be all prepared by her own hand; that the toast should be trusted to William, and that the third woodcock should be immediately despatched, with her kind regards, to her bachelor friend.

It is painful to dwell, even for a moment, on painful scenes; it is too painful to dwell upon them long or often. Let it suffice the reader to be told that, though the disposal of the third woodcock answered completely, inasmuch as it brought her a morning visit, and the loan of the last number of "Punch" as a return for it, the fate of her woodcock supper was to the full as unfortunate as that of the lobster. Had the dainty birds been two tame ducks, they need not have been more thoroughly roasted!

CHAPTER V.

MEANWHILE, Miss Elfreda Jenkyns commenced that long-wished-for period of her life, which was to introduce her to scenes as yet known to her only by description. But, confident in native energy, she felt as little fear about the future as regret for the past.

Miss Elfreda had moreover the advantage of possessing one very intimate friend. About five years before the death of her mother she had been fortunate enough to meet with a lady, whose studies and whose talents were in every way congenial to her own. This lady, by name Miss Tollbridge, was the sister of Major Tollbridge, adjutant to the regiment which was at that time quartered at Westhampton. She was very nearly

of the same age as Miss Elfreda, and both ladies were equally ready to welcome the fortunate introduction which brought them acquainted. For as neither of them was either young or handsome, they were both aware that the meeting with a person able and willing to appreciate the value of superior intellect was a most agreeable accident.

As long as the regiment remained at West-hampton these two ladies were rarely asunder; and after its removal an epistolary correspondence was established between them, which was punctually maintained on both sides.

They had not met since; but the allusion so constantly made in Miss Elfreda's letters to the precarious health of her mother, and her own firm resolve to profit by her freedom and her fortune when she obtained them, by taking up her residence in London for the rest of her life, had considerably influenced the proceedings of Miss Tollbridge.

Her father and mother were both dead, and she was therefore already in possession of as much independence as she was ever likely to possess, for her brother, the Major, had long ago got through his tiny patrimony, and now depended wholly upon his commission for a maintenance. He had married a widow lady, whose jointure of two hundred per annum had greatly assisted him, and his sister's income of one hundred, of which she paid him sixty as long as they remained together, had also contributed to keep his head above water. But his wife being dead, and his sister by no means inclined to share with him the sort of unsettled existence which his profession rendered necessary, they had agreed to separate, wisely enough perhaps. But the arrangement on the part of Miss Tollbridge would have been wiser still if she had taken her brother's advice, and placed herself in Devonshire in the house of a cousin, who would have given her a comfortable home for her sixty pounds a-year. But Miss Tollbridge had got it into her head, that if her friend Miss Elfreda Jenkyns really intended to live in London as soon as her mother was dead, the best possible plan would be for her to keep herself in readiness as an inmate, and as a friend and companion for life; or, at any rate, as long as Miss Elfreda should remain a spinster. Miss Tollbridge, though highly scientific and intellectual, was not a particularly sentimental lady, and whilst her original attachment to Miss Elfreda Jenkyns had been decidedly of a personal cha-

racter, and produced almost exclusively by the pleasure of being listened to by a person who seemed to know what she was talking about, it would not be doing justice to the variety of intellectual powers possessed by this remarkable woman, if her clear-headed appreciation of the advantages contingent upon a close domestic alliance with a dear friend, possessed of a fortune that more than quadrupled her own, were concealed.

But the same nice judgment which taught her to estimate justly the value of such a scheme taught her also that it must be angled for with caution; and, therefore, when she replied to Miss Elfreda's letter announcing the death of her venerable mother, and her own intention of immediately fulfilling her long-declared intention of removing to London, she said not a syllable about the probable advantages and certain pleasures which would accrue from their living together, but only offered her services in seeking for lodgings, inquiring for servants, and so forth.

If a strong resemblance in character be a good foundation for friendship, these two enlightened women were singularly well calculated to form a strict and affectionate alliance together, for they had many points of resemblance. In her answer to these cordial offers of service, Miss Elfreda replied by giving her a long and very accurate list of commissions, beginning with instructions to take a small but comfortable lodging for her, for one week, in a house where there was a respectable maid-servant to wait upon her, and ending with a small recapitulation of the most needful commodities which would be necessary to her comfort on arriving.

On entering the tidy little drawing-room prepared for her, the first object which met the eyes of Miss Elfreda was the figure of her friend Miss Tollbridge, which she instantly recognised, though nearly five years had elapsed since their last meeting. Nothing had been said in the letters which had recently passed between them of any wish on the part of Miss Elfreda, or any intention on the part of Miss Tollbridge, that this very early meeting should take place, and it was with a movement very like starting that the newly-arrived lady pronounced the monosyllable "Oh!" on perceiving her visitor.

"You did not expect to see me, my dear friend, did you?" said Miss Tollbridge, slightly colouring.

"No, I certainly—I never thought, my dear

Miss Tollbridge, of asking you to come at such an uncomfortable moment as this; but I shall be delighted to see you to-morrow. If you should happen to have a leisure hour between twelve and two—any time between twelve and two—I shall be most happy to see you.”

Miss Elfreda held the hand which her friend had extended to her as she said this, but she made no movement which indicated any intention of sitting down.

“I was in hopes, my dear, that I might be useful to you,” said Miss Tollbridge, very affectionately.

“You are excessively kind, my dear Miss Tollbridge,” replied Elfreda; “but I have no idea of bestowing my tediousness upon people, when I am conscious of being tired to death, and as stupid as an owl. Do let me see you to-morrow instead, will you?”

“Oh, my dear Elfreda! You know you can’t be stupid if you were to try. It is contrary to your nature. So don’t drive me away from you, dearest! It is quite a delight to look at you. I never in my life saw mourning become any one as it does you! You positively must let me stay and make some tea for you.”

This was a sort of desperate attempt to take the garrison by storm; but it did not answer.

“Upon my word you shall do no such thing, my dear Miss Tollbridge,” replied Miss Elfreda. “I know myself better than you do. You are excessively kind! But you have no idea what a capricious self-willed creature I am. Good night! Be sure to let me see you to-morrow morning.”

As she said this, the resolute Elfreda quietly but very perceptibly caused her friend to make a backward movement towards the door, a manœuvre which it was by no means difficult to achieve, inasmuch as she still retained the hand of Miss Tollbridge, who could not have resisted the gentle impulse which thus propelled her backwards, without taking more decided measures to do so than she appeared to think advisable.

Having reached the still open door, Miss Elfreda gave the hand of her friend a very affectionate parting squeeze, accompanied by a final and perfectly effectual application of the propelling process, and, repeating her cordial “Good night!” placed her on the little door-mat outside, and closed it between them.

Miss Tollbridge decidedly thought that

her friend’s caprice on this occasion had displayed itself by the most abominable ingratitude for all the trouble she had taken to make her comfortable, and she could not but feel that this being turned out of the door was but poor encouragement to her project of taking up her abode for ever within it.

But still Miss Tollbridge was not discouraged; she had great confidence in herself, and returned to her own vastly less comfortable abode with the determination of sharing that of her friend rather strengthened than weakened by what had passed; for in firmness of purpose Miss Tollbridge as closely resembled Miss Elfreda Jenkyns as if they had been twins, and resolute people always prefer meeting with a little resistance in their projects, in the hope of enjoying the great delight of conquering it.

“I dare say her fortune, by this time, is nearer twenty than ten thousand,” muttered the returned lady, in soliloquy, as she blew a small *dandy*-full of shavings and cinders into warmth for the purpose of causing the water in her diminutive tea-kettle to boil. For now her only immediate object was the giving that soothing consolation to herself in the shape of a cup or two of tea, which she had fondly hoped would have been given to her in much better style by another; and, truly, she sighed as she sipped it. But she sighed wholly and solely because the tea was bad, and not because she was discouraged. She was *not* discouraged, no, not a whit; and she presently smiled, while scraping a little bad butter very thinly over her bread, as she thought to herself that the change she meditated was well worth a little more trouble than hiring a lodging, and ordering tea there. So she very resignedly turned to the pages of a philosophical review, and passed the evening as comfortably as any lady could be expected to do under similar circumstances.

And Miss Elfreda passed her evening very comfortably also; and she likewise meditated a little upon the interview that has been described, as well as her friend.

“Not quite so fast, if you please, Miss Tollbridge,” she murmured inwardly, as she warmed her feet before the blazing fire, and enjoyed her tea and muffins. “You are a sensible woman, and have read a great deal, and I dare say I shall often like to have you; but I won’t be pestered by any body. And I know how to keep people at arm’s length as well as most ladies, I believe. Have I not made Miss Barbara’s darling, notwithstanding

his state, and his stall, look as quiet as a mouse when he suspected that I was going to talk him down? She *has* got everything very nice for me, poor thing, that is quite certain, and I dare say I shall be able to make her useful in many ways. I shall always be ready to employ her as much as she likes, provided she does not haunt me when I don't want her."

And then the independent Miss Elfreda unpacked her night-things, examined her comfortable-looking bed with great satisfaction, and the only sigh of regret she breathed during the whole of that solitary evening was towards its close, as she remembered that the philosophy at whose shrine she worshipped forbade the use of the warming-pan.

CHAPTER VI.

THE preliminary measures by which the spinster sisters commenced their respective careers were as different as their characters; Miss Barbara's most earnest wish being to preserve, as nearly as the diminished income which supplied her establishment rendered it possible, the *status quo* of that highly respectable manner of life which had for so many years obtained for herself and her kindred the honour and happiness of associating upon terms of familiar friendship with the reverend families of Westhampton Close. Whereas the darling wish of Miss Elfreda's heart was to insinuate herself into the acquaintance of as many people as she could possibly get hold of, requiring little more by way of qualification, than that they should be something "new and strange."

The operations of the elder sister, on first setting off upon the manner of life which she had so discreetly and judiciously sketched for herself, were greatly less complicated than those which were rendered necessary by the ambitious projects of her philosophical junior. A weekly little supper at her own house, sacred to Dr. Wroughtley and any two utilities which for the time being he might happen to prefer, (the important error in the cooking department having been speedily remedied by the restoration to office of the invaluable functionary she had so rashly dismissed,) secured to her many other suppers, almost as delightful, at the houses of many of her clerical friends; for not only did all those who enjoyed either her little parties, or her larger ones, scrupulously repay her invitations, but it became so clearly evident that she was a decided favourite throughout the

Close, that invitations flowed in upon her from all quarters, and the life she led was, upon the whole, exceedingly comfortable.

A very few months' experience convinced her that, notwithstanding her costly retinue of three servants, she would be perfectly well able to keep out of debt, and that, too, without ever restricting her invaluable friend Dr. Wroughtley from the enjoyment of a single supper or a single sauce. Her personal expenses were certainly upon rather a contracted scale, but that was her own affair; and as her servants were really and truly faithful servants, all her minute little economies were kept profoundly secret, and the consequence of Miss Barbara, in the eyes of her acquaintance, was very considerably increased by the solitary absolutism of her dominion.

The greatness achieved, and the influence obtained, by her sister Elfreda, were of a less simple character; being, perhaps, in pretty fair proportion to the complicated machinery of the scene which she had chosen for her experiment, as compared to that in which Miss Barbara was carrying on her peaceful steady little operations.

The great work of seeking and finding a lodging likely to suit her as a permanent residence was happily achieved, by the choice of a first and second floor in a moderately-sized house in Green Street. The rent of this was, however, so fearfully beyond the sum which she was to receive from her sister as her share of the Westhampton house, that it took some time to reconcile her mind to the startling demand. One hundred and twenty pounds a-year for the use of four small rooms and a closet just large enough to hold a little bed for a servant, considering how very scanty and how very dusky was their furniture, might well startle a lady who had been born and bred in such a mansion as that which she had forsaken at Westhampton.

But her industrious researches soon made it perfectly evident, that she could not fulfil her own designs, as to the position she intended to hold in society, if she set off by lodging herself too completely out of the reach of those with whom she hoped to associate, to leave any chance of their being able and willing to get at her. So the Green Street lodging was taken, and all very obvious defects in the furniture speedily and courageously supplied, from the sum she had received from her sister for her share of the substantial household goods of the Westhampton dwelling.

On first sketching out the style and manner of her projected London life, Miss Elfreda had proposed for herself the splendid establishment of a male and female servant; but steadfastly determined not to bring upon her courageous, not to say bold, projects for the future, either the ridicule or the reprobation which would inevitably follow her committing the fatal folly of exceeding her income, she no sooner made the above-mentioned disagreeable discovery relative to the price of lodgings, than she began to doubt as to the propriety of indulging herself with so costly a retinue.

On this point, however, she was not troubled by any of the doubts and uncertainties which had so grievously tormented her elder sister. Not all her high-minded adoration of science could enable her to contemplate the idea of having all the hoped-for embassies, transits, and receptions of her future existence performed by A MAID! Rather than this, she would have remained mouldering for ever, as she would have herself expressed it, among the rooks, the records, and the reverends of Westhampton and its cathedral! On this point, therefore, there was no doubt, no shadow of uncertainty; yet still she hesitated a little as to the absolute necessity of departing from her original plan. She did not like the idea of for ever abandoning all the comprehensive refinements and elegances expressed by that most elegant and lady-like phrase, "*my maid*,"—and it was not till the alarming conviction came upon her that she must positively have a new carpet and curtains, (which her landlady as positively refused to furnish,) that she resolutely abandoned it, and took all her subsequent measures accordingly.

During all this busy time, the notable manœuvrings of Miss Tollbridge went on steadfastly and steadily; and Miss Elfreda's equally notable system of resistance to a too familiar encroachment on her domicile continued equally unshaken. The dogged perseverance of the one, and the sturdy opposition of the other, would, in most cases, have produced an effectual separation of the parties by means either of a quarrel or a coldness. But it was not so here. Both ladies, after very deliberately estimating each other's value, came to the conclusion that wisdom lay in making as much use as they could of an acquaintance which could be dropped at any time, and might perhaps be made useful while it lasted.

No sooner had they both arrived at this very wise decision, than the worst of struggles between them ceased, and then they went on admirably, Miss Tollbridge never hinting that it would be the most convenient thing in the world for them to live together, nor even making it apparent that she thought it was very odd, and very unkind, if she were not kept to share her darling Elfreda's steak, chicken, or cutlet, two or three times in a week; while Miss Elfreda, on her side, no sooner felt the spur withdrawn than she began moving at a much brisker pace towards the renewal of their former intimacy, than while she found herself goaded onwards by the unskilful jockeyship of her old acquaintance.

No rational reader can for a moment suspect such a woman as Miss Elfreda of having withdrawn herself from the shelter of her native home in order to establish herself in London, unless she had been conscious of having some better chance of obtaining an introduction to the society she had so long been wishing to enjoy than any exertions of Miss Tollbridge could give her. She was, indeed, utterly incapable of any such folly. In the first place, the Dean of Westhampton had a married sister living, not only in London, but in May Fair; and as the late Mrs. Jenkyns had not long before her demise enjoyed the honour of receiving this lady at dinner, during a visit which she was making to her brother the Dean, Miss Elfreda had very little or rather no doubt of being able at once to inscribe the name of Mrs. Marshdale on her visiting list.

Then there was a first cousin of one of the prebends, whose eldest daughter had frequently been a visitor at Westhampton, and had so often been at the Jenkyns' parties, that the calling upon her and her family was quite a matter of course. The residence of the Davies' family was not, indeed, in so well-graced a part of the town as Bolton Row, yet Miss Elfreda almost preferred their locality, for it was that of Gower Street; for though she certainly would not have chosen to live there herself, she was fully aware of all the inestimable advantages which might accrue to her from an intimate association with those who did. Science seemed to unfurl a score of brilliant banners before her eyes as she thought of it, and visions of lecturers frequenting her pretty *salon*, and partaking of her little literary breakfasts, arose in beautiful abundance to her fancy.

Nor was this all. Perhaps the sheet anchor of her hopes was known to her through a less dignified medium than any other of her intended intimates, for Mr. Carey was only the brother of the Westhampton apothecary; but the London Mr. Carey was a lecturer in Albemarle Street. He, too, had made occasional visits to Westhampton, and he had never done so without his arrival there having been hailed by all the most distinguished families in the town and neighbourhood as the signal for a close-packed series of dinner parties. Not only, indeed, was no day suffered to pass without a dinner party of the *élite*, given in his honour, but as he never could spare days enough to satisfy the hospitable invitations of all who wished to honour him, breakfasts, and luncheons, and suppers were called in to assist in the expression of a feeling that was universal.

But I must not permit my natural partiality to the Jenkyns' family, to whom I am now devoting myself, to tempt me so to alter facts as to state that they were always, or indeed often, included in the very precious invitations given on those occasions. An old widow lady living in a country town, with two very plain elderly daughters, could scarcely be accounted convenient guests where all the magnates both of town and country would gladly accept a place; but, nevertheless, opportunities had not been wanting for the Jenkyns' family making acquaintance with that of Mr. Carey, and for very obvious reasons. There was not either in town or country any single family who had been such constant patients to Mr. Carey, and his father, and his grandfather before him, as the Jenkynses. They were not a particularly sickly race, but they were, and ever had been, rich enough to send for the apothecary, instead of economically dosing themselves; and as the books of the concern had clearly proved this to be the case through three successive generations, it is by no means extraordinary, taking this circumstance into the account in addition to all their other respectabilities, that Mr. Carey of Westhampton should entertain a feeling of great regard and respect for the Jenkyns' family. The consequence of this was, that he never permitted a visit from his brother to pass over without contriving, in some way or other, to make the Jenkyns' ladies partake the honour and happiness of seeing him. Sometimes he used a little fraternal tyranny in order to induce him to pass an evening with them, when the celebrity would very greatly have preferred

passing it with his agreeable relatives in the well-loved little paternal drawing-room at home; and sometimes the grateful reminiscences of the worthy apothecary would even drive him to the placing his son and daughter at a side-table, in order to enable him to invite *two* of the Jenkyns' ladies to dinner during the time of his brother's being a member of his family.

All this put together was amply sufficient to justify our *débutante* in setting down the name of Carey of Davies Street on the list of her London acquaintance. But such, and so great, was her wish to secure this advantage, that she did not leave her native city without being furnished with a note from the friendly apothecary to his brother, requesting him very earnestly to repay some of the favours which the Carey race had received from that of Jenkyns, by showing Miss Elfreda all the attention in his power.

There were moreover one or two other houses at which Miss Elfreda thought she should be fully justified in leaving cards, but it is not necessary to enumerate them; those that have been already mentioned proving amply sufficient as a wedge to enable so able an engineer to make her way into very good society, exactly in the direction in which she wanted to go. This success was doubtless chiefly owing to her own skill, and to the reflective wisdom with which she had profited by every circumstance that could possibly be turned to good account. But she was ere long favoured also by accident, as well as wisdom, in a manner as unexpected as profitable.

CHAPTER VII.

THIS must be a chapter of Letters.

No. 1.

From Mrs. Maitland to her sister, Barbara Jenkyns.

“Madras, November 7th, 18—.

“I had hoped, my dear sister, that the next time I addressed you would have been by voice, and not by pen. But this hope is over. I shall never see my early home again. Failing health and accumulated sorrows have overpowered me, and it is with difficulty that I now write the last lines I shall ever address to you. You have already been made acquainted with the desolation that has fallen on me. I have no strength left to dwell upon it. My last effort must be for my poor orphan girl, my only remaining child, my dear, thoughtless, kind-hearted Judith. She has a

larger fortune than I would wish her to have, but I can only pray that it may not prove a snare to her in any way. I have no power to alter the disposition of the property, or I would willingly divide it with poor Penelope's boy, who I greatly fear will be left very scantily provided for. It would be better for both the children could this large sum of money be divided between them. But I have no power to do this, so it is idle to talk about it. All I can do for my dear girl is to beg my sisters to receive her as kindly as I am sure they would receive me, were my life spared long enough for me to return to them. Everything respecting her fortune has been properly attended to by English lawyers of the highest reputation here. I am told that she will immediately become a ward in Chancery, so you will have no trouble on that score, and all I have to request is, that you and my dear sister Elfreda will join together in taking personal charge of her till such time as she shall either be married, or come of age. If you continue to live together, I hope she will live with you both; but, should you live apart, I would wish her to have the privilege of choice as to which she shall reside with; sometimes perhaps being with the one, and sometimes with the other. I would gladly join my sister Penelope in this personal guardianship, but I do not even know where she is, nor where she is likely to be. This letter, short as it is, has been written at long intervals, and not without great difficulty, so you will excuse its being less clear and precise perhaps than it ought to be. And now I must bid you a long adieu, dear sister, praying you to be kind to my child, and may our heavenly Father be kind to you!

"JUDITH MAITLAND."

No. 2.

Mrs. Maitland to Miss Elfreda Jenkyns.

"My dear Elfreda,—It is so long since we parted, that I can hardly hope you still think of me as affectionately as I still think of you; for no one, I believe, who remains in their own country, can preserve the same warm affections for the friends of their youth, as those do who have been so unfortunate as to be banished from it. I write with great difficulty, dear sister, and therefore I will only say, God bless you! My letter to our sister Barbara will explain to you both what my wishes are respecting the dear child I leave behind me. Farewell!" (And this, too, was signed with a trembling hand.) "JUDITH MAITLAND."

No. 3.

From Mrs. Maitland to Mrs. Worthington.
"Though ignorant of your present abode, my dear Penelope—for the sad letter which announced the death of your husband only told me that you thought you could not long endure to remain in Rome, where you had been so very happy, and were now so very wretched—though you gave me no hint as to where you were likely to be, still I cannot let the last packet I shall ever send to Europe be made up without addressing one parting word of affection to you. Had I the power, dearest Penelope, I would leave to you and your dear boy some mark of my affection; but my little girl must inherit all my fortune as well as that of her father, the only property I can call my own being some diamonds, rather good ones, I believe, which were given me by my dear husband. My Judith shall carry these to England with a charge to find you out, my dear sister, and to deliver them into your hands. The necklace, earrings, and bracelets are for you; the ring, which contains the finest stone of all, is for your son Charles. God bless you both!"

"JUDITH MAITLAND."

No. 4.

Was only an envelope to the other three. It was addressed, in a trembling character, to her daughter, and contained these words:—

"Convey these letters to England, my dearest child, but read and transcribe them all before they are delivered. Their contents will inform you, more clearly than I have now power to do in any other way, what my wishes are. . . . And now . . . Be happy, my Judith! Be good! good, conscientious, and generous, like your dear father. . . . I need not say be kind to those around you . . . for I think his heart lives again in his child. God, in his mercy, protect and bless you, prays

"Your dying mother,

"JUDITH MAITLAND."

"P.S.—Lose no time in finding your poor dear aunt Worthington—and be ever kind to her."

This last letter was written and sealed but a few hours before the still lovely Mrs. Maitland breathed her last. It is needless to describe the feelings with which they were perused by her orphan child. They were sad enough. The legal friend who had soothed the last moments of the dying mother, by promising that every possible care and attention

should be given to her child, redeemed the pledge very faithfully. He provided the young heiress with an European attendant, herself a widow, wishing to return to her native Scotland, who was in all ways worthy of the trust reposed in her; and he caused poor Mrs. Maitland's testamentary letters to be a second time copied, and the originals preserved for the purpose of being delivered by her child, while the copies were forwarded, a month before the departure of Judith, to the address of Miss Barbara Jenkyns, in order that her coming might be expected and prepared for.

These letters to announce her arrived in due time, and so did the young Judith herself; but as this chapter is specially dedicated to letters, it shall contain authentic copies of those which passed between the two maiden aunts, to whose care she was specially consigned.

The first sensations of Miss Barbara, on receiving the large packet addressed to her, were those of irritation, nay, almost of indignation, for the postage was heavy; and these feelings were doubtless the stronger from the circumstance of the good lady having had a very remarkable run of bad luck at the card-table during the whole of the last week; moreover, she was beginning to make the disagreeable discovery that, in order to be very comfortable, and able to live in the style that suited her refined taste, her hospitable feelings, and her long-established standing in society, she ought to have a little more money.

The postage, therefore, was not paid without a frown.

But, to do her justice, the frown was changed for tears a few minutes afterwards. She had already heard of the death of her brother-in-law, and of that also of two out of the three children he had left; and she had worn mourning, and expressed her sorrow on the occasion, in a perfectly proper manner, to her neighbours.

But the feelings with which she now learned the death of her sister were very different. For some half hour or so her sorrow was deep and genuine. The eighteen years that had passed since the beautiful Judith Jenkyns had left that house as a bride seemed to contract themselves into so short a span, that the whole scene was before her eyes as if it had happened yesterday. Her beauty, her smiles, her pretty playfulness, were no longer remembered with either envy or contempt. She had never before, during the whole course of those eighteen years, recollected how warmly

affectionate had been the last kiss which this youngest sister had impressed upon her forehead a few minutes before her departure, but now she seemed to feel it as if her lips had been that moment withdrawn, and she certainly did cry heartily.

But though these "natural tears were shed, she wiped them soon," an operation quite as natural in her case as the shedding them, for Miss Barbara Jenkyns was in the habit of thinking a good deal about herself, and the news contained in this packet concerned her nearly. It was so providential, too, as she observed to herself, that such intelligence should have reached her just at the very moment she was thinking that her annual income would never hold out, unless she could hit upon some scheme for saving money. That the said income should be ever increased, unless, indeed, she happened to survive her sister Elfreda, had never entered her head as a thing possible. But now the case was widely different. Her income would be increased, and very greatly increased, too, if she were to have the charge of a young niece, possessed of forty thousand pounds. She had heard, again and again, of very noble allowances being made in such cases by Lord Chancellors, and there could be no reasonable doubt but that so it would be now. It would be six years before her niece would attain her majority, and even when this long interval was passed, who could say how much longer it might be before the dear child might be silly enough to marry?

Of course, as Miss Barbara strongly felt, she would owe it to herself not to spend the allowance she was about to receive from the Lord Chancellor in any foolishly lavish expenses. Her house and her table were good enough to satisfy any young lady, and all the increased expenditure that would be required could not amount, she thought, at the very utmost, to above fifty pounds a-year, "which would be just enough to enable her to go on with her delightful little parties at home, without running into debt for them; and then it would be her duty to give nice little parties, because every one knew it was exactly the sort of thing young girls like. Her poor dear mother, before her, delighted in little parties! And, with *her* good management, fifty pounds more would clear every thing; and the rest of the allowance, which at the very least must be four or five hundred a-year, would be running up so as to keep her out of trouble, if the dear child was at

last silly enough to take it into her head to marry."

It will be perceived, that in all these meditations Miss Barbara appeared entirely to overlook the possibility that her sister Elfreda might choose to come in for a share of this profitable guardianship. But this was not exactly the case. She could not read the letter addressed to her sister Elfreda, because it was a sealed letter; but from the circumstance of the packet having been directed to her, joined to her own deep conviction that the Lord Chancellor, if referred to, would instantly perceive the superior propriety of her residence, in the very centre of the prebendal society of Westhampton, as the home of a young girl, to that of a single lady living in the midst of so depraved a capital as London, so completely settled the question, that her thoughts scarcely dwelt upon the idea of her dividing the charge with her as a thing possible.

In truth, at that moment the flutter of her spirits was such as scarcely to leave her the power of thinking much of anything, save the necessity of immediately preparing for the reception of her young charge. She, therefore, lost no time in inclosing the letter addressed to Miss Elfreda, accompanied with the following epistle from herself.

No. 5.

"My dear Elfreda,—The inclosed letter will announce to you the melancholy intelligence that we have lost our poor sister Judith. In her sad farewell letter to me, she expresses her wish that I should immediately take charge of the only child she has left, and this I immediately intend to do. She will be forwarded to me by the next ship. The poor child is at a very troublesome age; but I must not mind that, I must do my duty. It is possible that poor Judith's letter to you may express a natural wish that you, too, should be kind and serviceable to the poor orphan. And you would be ready to be so, my dear Elfreda, I have no doubt, did circumstances permit your doing it. But a residence with a single lady, so young-looking as you are, in such a place as London, is not to be thought of for a moment for a young girl like our niece Judith; and that you will be of the same opinion yourself, I have no doubt. But this consideration need not prevent your receiving the poor child for a few days, on her first arrival from India; and I, too, shall be glad to accept a bed at your house when I come up,

which I must do for the purpose of meeting her, and of bringing her to her home in Westhampton, in such a manner as the Lord Chancellor will approve, for poor little Judith is to be a ward in Chancery!

"Let me have a line from you to tell me if you can accommodate me with a bed. I believe we may expect Judith in about a month.

"I remain,

"Your affectionate Sister,

"BARBARA JENKYNs."

Miss Elfreda was a good deal startled by the reception of this letter, and she, too, shed some sisterly tears over the one it inclosed. She might have shed more, perhaps, had not Miss Barbara's communication given birth to a multitude of speculations which rendered it impossible to indulge such tender weakness long.

Miss Elfreda Jenkyns knew what being a ward in Chancery meant, quite as well as her elder sister. Poor little girls that were bequeathed to the charitable care of maiden aunts never were made wards in Chancery. Moreover, Miss Elfreda was quite aware of the fact, that her sister Judith's fortune had been settled at her marriage upon herself and her children, so that this poor little girl had ten thousand pounds, even if her father, the Colonel, had died without leaving her a *son*, a contingency which she felt to be by no means probable, inasmuch as she never remembered to have heard her military brother-in-law mentioned but as a highly-esteemed officer and very rising man.

There was a good deal of sarcastic acuteness in the smile which chased her tears, as she remembered all this. The guardianship of a ward in Chancery, bringing a handsome allowance with her, would have been quite as agreeable to Miss Elfreda as to Miss Barbara, and, to give the result of her meditations in a few words, she sat down to answer her sister Barbara's epistle, fully determined to be very civil, but equally so to share in the profitable business of boarding a wealthy niece with a long minority before her, *or else* to know the reason why.

Her letter was as follows:

"My dear Barbara,—It is a grievous thing to hear of the death of a dear sister, and she so young, too! But the will of Heaven be done in this, as in all things. Our poor departed Judith refers me to her letter to you for information respecting all she wishes us

to do for her dear child, and I must therefore beg you to forward the said letter to me forthwith. Excuse my not writing to you at greater length, but at this moment I am unfit for any employment save meditating on the melancholy news you have sent me.

"I remain,

"Your affectionate sister,

"ELFREDA JENKYNs."

To this the return of the post brought the following reply :—

"My dear Elfreda,—Poor dear Judith's letter was too sad a one to be kept without pain ; I have therefore destroyed it. But it matters not, for my last despatch tells you quite as much as the letter itself could do. It was very short, being written when she was very near her end.

"You do not answer my question about the bed, Can I be accommodated at your lodgings? Let me know this at once, if you please, because it may make a difference in my arrangements. But I had rather not take a separate lodging, if I can avoid it."

"Soh! She has destroyed the letter, has she?" murmured Miss Elfreda, rather gloomily. "That's a strong measure, Miss Barbara. But if she really has destroyed it," pursued the deeply meditative lady, "she has destroyed with it all the exclusive claim which it might give her to the guardianship of our orphan niece, and in that case our claims will be equal." And then she penned the last letter of the series which this chapter promised to communicate to the reader.

No. 6.

"My dear Barbara,—I am sorry to say that I cannot give you a bed. My lodgings only enable me to furnish *one* for the use of a friend, and upon this occasion you must be aware that it is more important to avoid sending poor little Judith to a strange lodging, than for you to have recourse to it. I hope you did not destroy your Indian letters without making a memorandum of all the particulars they might contain respecting the time and place of our meeting the poor child. The Lord Chancellor will think you an odd sort of guardian, if he hears that you have done this."

Miss Barbara, however, only smiled at the touch of this blunt little arrow, for no document could possibly be in safer custody than that which had accompanied the letters of poor Mrs. Maitland, and which rehearsed

with the greatest accuracy the name and dwelling of the agent who was instructed to superintend the landing of the young orphan and her effects. But as Miss Barbara fully intended to be in London herself at the time when she was given to understand that it was likely the vessel would arrive, she had not thought it necessary to trouble Miss Elfreda with any observations on the subject.

CHAPTER VIII.

I HAVE already hinted, I believe, that both the unmarried Miss Jenkynses were clever women. They certainly were so; and although the nature of their respective intellects differed in some respects, there were other points in which they greatly resembled each other. They had both of them, for instance, a peculiarly strong antipathy to being "taken in," as it is called, or circumvented in any way by the sharper acuteness of another; and they would either of them have encountered a very considerable degree of trouble and fatigue, rather than have submitted to it.

It was unquestionably in obedience to this species of instinct that Miss Elfreda Jenkyns, perceiving that her elder sister had no intention of communicating to her whatever intelligence she might have received respecting the precise time and manner of their niece's arrival, determined upon taking advantage of her own residence in London in order to obtain it for herself. She knew she was to come by the "next ship," and she thought she could make this sufficient.

The doing this was attended with some little trouble, but there was less real difficulty in the business than might have been felt by a less active and intelligent inquirer.

Miss Elfreda had been eminently successful in her efforts to enlarge her circle of acquaintance in London, and not even Miss Barbara herself could have denied (though she highly disapproved the bold independence of her measures) that the means she had taken to effect this had so uniformly answered the purposes for which they had been adopted, as to prove that her sister Elfreda was better fitted for the enterprise upon which she had started than most people would have been. Her pretty lady-like lodging, her well-appointed footman, her judiciously notorious love of science, and her liberal devotion to the fashionable cause of universal "go-aheadness, had given her already a species of second-rate May Fair celebrity, which was

more than sufficient to get her through all the difficulties of the inquiry she was so anxious to make.

For who could be so churlish as to refuse a little assistance in such a matter, to one who was so willing to render it upon all occasions? Where could any gentleman who had lecture-loving daughters find a more unexceptionable chaperon for them than Miss Elfreda Jenkyns? So perfectly respectable in every way! Fathers, mothers, sisters, and brothers, were all equally convinced that not a single word of any kind could be said against Miss Elfreda Jenkyns.

She was, moreover, always ready to walk in the Park with young ladies, when the footman of their family was required elsewhere; and no liveried lackey in London had more decidedly the air of being fit to walk behind a party of ladies than the individual who performed this office to Miss Elfreda. In cases of shopping, also, her services were equally unexceptionable and equally ready; and moreover she had most amiably performed, on more occasions than one, that most laborious effort of female self-sacrifice, the going as deputy mamma with young ladies to a ball, and that, too, in cases where the cotillion was as inevitable as the weary yawning which accompanied it.

The result of all this was, as it most surely ought to have been, that out of four gentlemen to whom Miss Elfreda addressed herself, three undertook to promise that she should receive all the information she wished for, in perfectly good time to prevent any danger that her young niece should get much nearer London than the Downs before she received notice of her approach.

These promises were as punctually fulfilled as cordially given; for, independently of Miss Elfreda's personal influence, there was certainly something rather interesting in the nature of the commission, and however exact the intelligence received by Miss Barbara, that obtained by her sister was at least equally so.

There were still several days to elapse before the good ship "Neptune" was expected, or could possibly arrive, and this interval was spent by Miss Elfreda in making the little bed-room behind her own as comfortable as possible.

"Miss Barbara has made no reply to my refusing the favour of her company here," thought she, as she occupied herself in arranging the pins on the nicely-laced pin-

cushion which awaited her niece. "So much the better. It saves me the trouble of a rejoinder. I have no doubt that she will be very punctually on the look-out somewhere or other, but she will find that her sentimental destruction of poor Judith's last letter has not exactly answered."

The weather was fine, the light breeze favourable, and the noble "Neptune" came up the river with the dignity and grace of an accomplished being. Had it not been for this fair weather, favouring breeze, and graceful bearing of the ocean monarch, at least one expectant at the London Docks would have been disappointed, for the attentive captain offered to obtain a land conveyance from Deal for the young heiress and her attendant; but Miss Maitland assured him that she liked the ship best, and the ship therefore it was which brought her to London.

An agent employed by Miss Elfreda, and another, whose services had been bespoken by the friendly lawyer at Madras and communicated with by Miss Barbara, came forward together to make inquiries for the person and the luggage of Miss Maitland, passenger from Madras to London. This double demand occasioned some little difficulty, and some little delay, for the captain told the young lady that he thought she had better not go on shore till she had decided to which of these accredited agents he should deliver her luggage.

The young Judith looked harassed and puzzled for a minute or two, but then disposed of the question in a very business-like way by saying, "I dare say both these gentlemen would do equally well; but don't you think, captain, that it is the one to whom the things are sent who ought to take them?"

"They are not sent to any one, are they, Miss Maitland?" replied the captain. "They are your property, and all the cases have your name upon them."

"Yes, sir. But look here," said the young Judith, pointing to a well-mounted and stout-looking box, which might have been the dressing-case of a gentleman, but which had stood on her own little dressing-table, though unopened, throughout the passage, and which she well knew contained the diamonds which she was conveying to her aunt Worthington.

"Look here, sir." And she pointed out a scrap of parchment, strongly fastened to one of the handles, and inscribed

MISS JUDITH MAITLAND,
 Passenger by the Ship "Neptune."
 To the care of Mr. Joseph Atkins,
 No. 5, — Street, London Docks.

"Is the same address on all your packages, young lady?" demanded the captain.

"Yes, sir, I believe so," replied Judith.

"And you, sir, I believe, are Mr. Joseph Atkins?" said the captain. The individual he addressed answered in the affirmative.

"Then, sir, you will take charge of this young lady and her effects," said the captain, placing the dressing-case, which he was aware was of value, in his hands.

"Of course," he added, "you have received advice as to what is to be done with them, and where she is to go?"

"I have, sir," responded Mr. Joseph Atkins.

"And so have I, sir," said the gentleman engaged by Miss Elfreda.

"I beg your pardon, gentlemen, but I am very busy, and cannot settle this matter for you. All I can do is to make over the property committed to my charge with this young lady to the agent named on the address by her Madras friends."

And having uttered these words civilly, but with a great deal of rapidity, the captain turned away, and was out of sight in a moment.

The dismissed agent shrugged his shoulders, and moved off without even deigning to tell the young lady that her affectionate aunt, Miss Elfreda Jenkyns, was at that moment seated in a fly at the dock-yard gates, with the most eager desire to embrace her. In truth, the gentleman was too irate at this abortive termination to all the vehement injunctions he had received from this expectant aunt and her *employés*, to pause for a moment before he turned his back upon the whole affair. Nevertheless, some feeling or other, it might be mischief or it might be mercy, induced him as he left the docks to present his head at the window of Miss Elfreda's carriage, and to say, "Your young lady and her parcels, madam, are consigned to another agent."

Meanwhile Miss Barbara, after giving due notice of her arrival to Mr. Atkins, had taken possession of a private room at the railway hotel, at which she had arrived the evening before, and was awaiting the coming of her niece with as much patience and composure as she could muster.

Deeply offended by Miss Elfreda's refusal of a bed, she had determined to revenge herself by setting off with her niece to Westhampton the moment she could get possession of her, and was not without hopes of being able, by the counsel and assistance of Dr. Wroughtley, to obtain an order from the Chancellor for her having the entire personal charge of the young lady, before Miss Elfreda could have received any positive information respecting her arrival.

"She will abuse me famously, I know that," said the angry lady in soliloquy, as she sat anxiously looking out of the hotel window; "but her letter of refusal to my humble request for a night's lodging is more than sufficient to justify me in the eyes of the whole world. Her boasted cleverness has not done her much good here. Never was a more egregious blunder made! Had she consented to take me in, we must have received the child together, and I might have found some difficulty in making the young Judith at once understand the decided superiority of my right to become her guardian. But now the difficulty is thrown into the other scale. I wonder how, and when, Miss Elfreda will find an opportunity of making any personal acquaintance with the young lady? She has given me a lesson on the subject of sisterly hospitality which I shall certainly treasure in my memory, and this may prove an impediment to any projects she may have conceived of commencing the acquaintance at my house. As to my permitting a young female orphan under my protection to set forth upon an expedition to London, it is probable that I may consult some of my clerical friends, as well as the Lord Chancellor, before I consent to it."

Laborious cogitations, and minute arrangements concerning the unknown future, may sometimes furnish a very agreeable occupation, but it must almost always be an idle one.

While the meditations recorded above were passing through the soul of Miss Barbara Jenkyns, the body of her sister Elfreda was actively engaged in a manner admirably well calculated to render all her purposes and intentions abortive.

No sooner had the agent she had employed retreated from the door of the carriage, which he did the instant he had delivered himself of the intelligence which he had thought proper to bestow, than Miss Elfreda thrust her head out of the window, and ordered her

man William to let her out. The moment this command was obeyed, she presented a card at the gate with the name of a very influential gentleman upon it, who had been propitiated by the intervention of one of her friends, and who had, with his own hand, written a request that the bearer might receive every attention and assistance for the purpose of immediately joining a young relation, who was expected to arrive as a passenger by the "Neptune."

This card proved a most effectual passport, and at once enabled her, with the additional assistance of William as a vanguard, to make her way exactly to the spot where she most wished to find herself—namely, *vis-à-vis* with her niece Judith.

There is often a mysterious sort of family likeness between children of the same parents which makes itself felt, even where the individuals, if accurately described, would appear to be as completely dissimilar as possible. It was probably some resemblance of this sort which caused Judith to exclaim, the moment Miss Elfreda approached her,

"I am sure you are my aunt! Oh! I am so glad!"

It was impossible at that moment that Miss Elfreda could have listened to words more every way agreeable.

Her niece was found—her sister was not—and the words with which she was greeted by the pretty young creature before her appeared to promise everything she could wish from the immense advantage of being first in the field.

Nothing could be more cordial on both sides than the embracings which followed, nor was the kindly feeling between them at all likely to be lessened by the tears which started to the eyes of both when Miss Elfreda exclaimed, almost involuntarily, "Alas! poor sister Judith! you are the very image of her!"

This likeness was, indeed, very striking, and might well have softened the aspect and the voice of a harsher nature than that of Miss Elfreda, who, notwithstanding the steadfast firmness with which she had sought what she loved to call *the centre of science*, was not an ill-tempered woman.

But their emotions, both of joy and sadness, were obliged to yield to the very matter-of-fact observation of Mr. Joseph Atkins upon the absolute necessity which the orders he had received laid him under, of delivering the packages bearing Miss Maitland's name, and

the young lady herself also, if she had no very particular objection, into the hands of the lady from whom he had recently received the letter which he held in his hand.

"Have I the honour of speaking to Miss Jenkyns?" said the agent, politely uncovering his head, and bowing to Miss Elfreda.

"Yes, certainly, sir!" she eagerly replied, adding, with no very strong emphasis upon her Christian name, "I am Miss Elfreda Jenkyns."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Jenkyns, a thousand times. Everything is right, then," returned the agent, evidently delighted at having brought his business so speedily to a conclusion. "You, then, are the lady that wrote this letter, and therefore—"

But this was going farther than the discreet Miss Elfreda intended; not to mention that such a deception was by no means absolutely necessary to her purpose; she therefore very quietly replied, "No, sir, I did not write that letter; it was written by my sister Barbara."

"Oh!—But it is just the same thing, aunt," cried Judith, eagerly. "I have got the copies of poor dear mamma's letters to you both, and it is just the same thing, I do assure you. Do not let us stand talking about it here any longer. May I not go home with you directly? I do so long to be in a house again! Your man can take that casket, can't he? And all the rest of the things may be sent after us, you know. I am so glad I have found you, dear aunt! It is such a comfort!" And again the bright eyes of the young Judith were filled with tears, though she smiled upon her aunt very sweetly at the same moment.

This appeal was answered with all the warmth it deserved, and Miss Elfreda, having taken possession of the arm of her niece, told William to take possession of the dressing-case, but Mr. Joseph Atkins demurred about giving it up.

"If you are not the lady who did me the honour of writing this letter," he said, "I am afraid that I shall not be performing my duty in a regular way, if I deliver Miss Maitland's property to you. Will it not be better for us all," he added, "to adjourn to the Euston-square Station Hotel, where, as of course you know, the other Miss Jenkyns is waiting for us? and there I may receive fresh orders, perhaps, from all you three ladies at once."

Miss Elfreda paused for half a moment, but

no more. That half moment was quite sufficient to bring her to the conviction that she could by no possibility refuse compliance with this proposal, without getting into a scrape. Besides, she had already done, and already heard, quite enough to satisfy her that she had effectually circumvented her sister's projects; and as she greatly liked the idea of meeting her under such circumstances, and of proving to her at once, and for ever, that she was not a person to be either deluded or set aside with impunity, she gave a very cordial acquiescence to Mr. Joseph Atkins' proposal, adding that she had a carriage at the gate, which could convey them all very conveniently.

"Then to your carriage, my good lady, I will myself convey this little box," said the agent; "and it may be as well, perhaps, as this lady is rather a young traveller, to give you the same hint which the captain gave me concerning it. He told me that it contained jewels of very considerable value."

Miss Elfreda nodded her head, and endeavoured to look as if she knew all about it, but was entirely defeated in this attempt by Judith's saying, —

"You need not be afraid of my not taking care of that box, sir, for I packed it with my own hands upon poor mamma's bed, and it contains all the diamonds she had; they are all for my aunt Penelope," she added, turning to her newly found relative.

This startling piece of information had the effect of completely overthrowing Miss Elfreda's aspect of composure for a minute or two.

"Your aunt Penelope, my dear? I think you must have made some mistake, Judith. Your aunt Penelope is the last person in the world, I should think, for any body to send diamonds to. Besides, my dear child, your poor dear mamma would never have given her diamonds away from her own daughter. Perhaps she has left her a ring, or something of that sort; but I am sure I don't know where you are to find her; she never visits now. We have not heard of her for years; she took a miff about something, and cut us entirely."

"She never cut mamma," replied Judith, "and that is the reason, I suppose, why mamma seemed to think so much about her when she was dying. If she is alive, I must find her, for mamma said the diamonds might be useful to her, and that was the reason for her giving them to aunt Penelope, instead of

giving them to me. She told me all about it, aunt; and I understood it perfectly."

This conversation took place as they were proceeding towards the dock-gates. But upon Judith's ceasing to speak, Mr. Atkins stopped, and said, "Have you no carpet bag, Miss, or any thing of that sort, that I might get passed for you, in case we can't get your luggage cleared directly?"

"Good gracious! To be sure there is," replied Judith. "The captain told me about taking a carpet bag, and Mrs. Mills is at this very moment packing it up, I believe. I must go on board again for one minute, aunt, if you please."

Though this reference to Miss Elfreda was made in a manner which seemed to ask for her consent to the measure proposed, it was not waited for. Scarcely did Judith permit herself to finish the sentence, before she was in rapid motion in the direction contrary to that which they had been pursuing, and the next moment she was again upon the deck of the "Neptune," and in half a one after she had dipped down the cabin stairs, and was out of sight.

The agent, Miss Elfreda, and her man William, stood still and waited her return, for there was nothing else to be done, though the complacency of the affectionate aunt was a little disturbed by the elbowing she got from the conflicting streams of goers and comers which were bustling past her. This did not last very long, however, for quite as soon as it was reasonable to expect her, the panting Judith returned, accompanied by a matronly-looking female carrying a carpet bag, who she introduced to her aunt as "dear good Mrs. Mills, who had taken as much care of her as if she had been her own child."

No further delay occurred. They reached the carriage, and the carriage reached the Euston Station Hotel without encountering any further impediment.

CHAPTER IX.

ON inquiring for Miss Jenkyns, they were immediately ushered into the presence of the impatient and greatly fatigued Miss Barbara, who had not only taken a very long journey the preceding day, but had nearly worn out her strength, as well as her patience, by the incredible perseverance with which she had been looking out of the window. Yet, after all, poor lady, Miss Elfreda's fly did not approach the hotel by the side that her window commanded, so that it was without the slight-

est preparation that when, at length, the door of her room opened, the eager glance she directed towards it was answered by a nod of the head, and a very meaning smile, from her sister Elfreda.

"Elfreda!" she exclaimed, almost with a shriek.

"Yes, Barbara! here I am, and I have brought our dear niece with me. She is a sweet girl! and so like her poor mother! But how could you think of sitting in all this style and state up here, sister Barbara, instead of going down to the Docks, as I did, to look after her? Upon my word it was very lucky that I was a little more upon the alert than yourself, or the poor child would have had but a cold reception to the land of her fathers. But here she is, safe and sound, you see."

However well inclined Miss Barbara might have been to accuse her sister of unauthorized and most impertinent interference, she could not but feel that the doing so at this moment was impossible, and her common sense and discretion enabled her to embrace the young stranger very affectionately.

Neither did she make any inquiries as to the manner in which Miss Elfreda had got possession of her niece, which would so evidently have been a means of enabling that extremely unsisterly and disagreeable individual to detail her manœuvres, and triumph in their success, that she very judiciously avoided the subject altogether.

"I am thankful for seeing you looking so well, my dear, and we ought all of us to be thankful for your having escaped all the perils and dangers of so awful a voyage!" she said, very solemnly, and with a devotional sort of tone, which was intended to account for the remarkable fact of her not taking the slightest notice of her sister.

Miss Elfreda was in a much more sociable and communicative frame of mind, and not only seated herself uninvited, but began chatting away to the lawful occupant of the apartment with a lively fluency that must have been pretty considerably provoking to her demure-looking sister.

But Miss Barbara made no attempt to stop her; she was in fact silently collecting all her powers of mind for the purpose of seizing with an irresistible *tour de force* upon the person of the young ward. Before her purpose, or rather her project, was ripened in her mind, however, her ruminations were interrupted by Mr. Joseph Atkins.

"I beg your pardon, ladies," said he, "but there can't be any doubt but that the young lady must be anxious to get her trunks and packing-cases all cleared through the Custom-house and in her own possession; and her best chance for this is by my taking my leave, and getting back as fast as may be to the Docks. Passengers' luggage is always first looked to, and I am in good hope we may get through to-day, if I don't waste my time. And now, Miss Maitland, I will give you back your jewels, and take my leave."

And so saying, Mr. Joseph Atkins placed the dressing-case, which he still held on his knee, upon a corner of a table, close to which Judith was sitting.

She thanked him, half rose, wished him good morning, and then sat down again, drawing the dressing-case towards her, and placing her arm upon it.

There was something either in Mr. Atkins' allusion to jewels, or in the manner in which Judith seemed to take especial charge of the case that contained them, which seemed to rouse the dormant faculties of Miss Barbara.

"Jewels, my dear? Have you got jewels to take care of?" said she. "You had better make them over to my charge, my dear. We shall set out for Westhampton as soon as ever the agent lets us have your luggage; but it won't do for you to have the trouble of holding them that way till we go. It can't be before to-morrow, you know; so give them to me, my dear, and I will lock them up."

"Thank you, aunt," replied Judith, "but I don't think I need trouble you. They are locked up, you see, and it is a Bramah lock, so I am quite sure they are safe."

"Yes, my poor dear child! I have no doubt that they are as safe as locking can make them; but the case itself, you know, may be taken away," said Miss Barbara.

"Nonsense, sister Barbara! Why do you put such notions into the dear child's head? You will make her afraid of her shadow. I dare say the hotel is very respectable, though why you should have troubled yourself to come here it is not very easy to guess, considering that Judith happened to have an aunt living in London," said Miss Elfreda, with a little laugh.

"Ladies living in London may, perhaps, be less scrupulous in their manner of fulfilling their duties than ladies who live in the country," returned Miss Barbara, with a sigh that had a good deal of pious pity in it.

"I thought I had made you aware, sister Elfreda," she continued, "that I had received a testamentary document from our dear departed sister, written in her last moments, in which she desired me to take the personal charge of her child; and it is hardly to be supposed that after this I would suffer that precious child to arrive in such a place as London without being there myself to take care of her."

"I am sure you must be a very kind person to take so much trouble about me," said Judith, giving her a sweet smile; "but if you happened to read poor mamma's letter when you were more composed than you could be just at first, you would have found out that she had been too considerate to throw all the trouble that I am likely to give upon any one person. That would be too much to bear, would it not?" she added, playfully. "Have you got mamma's letter with you, aunt Barbara?"

"No, my dear, I have not. It made me too melancholy!" replied Miss Barbara.

"Well! never mind!" rejoined Judith, who was really touched by the look of profound misery expressed by the features of her elder aunt at that moment. "Never mind, aunt." And, as she said it, she left her chair, and seating herself on the sofa beside the mournful-looking Miss Barbara, took hold of her hand, and kissed her.

Judith was quite right in thinking the expression of sorrow she read on her aunt's features was genuine; but she was quite wrong in her interpretation of the cause. The poor little girl, whose heart was swelling with tenderness towards the sisters of her mother, whom she had so fondly loved, really and truly believed that Miss Barbara Jenkyns looked as if she were going to cry, and that she was in fact very likely to do so, because she was thinking of her dear mamma and of the piteous letter which she had sent to her. Whereas, in truth, Miss Barbara was only exerting all her faculties to get out of the scrape into which her very perilous diplomacy had thrown her.

Miss Elfreda enjoyed the scene exceedingly. Her own manœuvres had been as successful as those of her sister had been the reverse, and she felt her triumph.

"I have no doubt, Barbara, that it was a very sad letter," she said; "written under such circumstances, how could it be otherwise? I am sure my heart will ache too, when I come to read it. But business is business,

you know, and read it I must, painful or not painful."

"But you can't read it, I tell you," returned Miss Barbara, with rather more firmness than sadness in the look she bestowed on her; "you cannot read it, for I have not got it, I tell you."

"But I have, dear aunt!" cried Judith, in an accent of sweet consolatory assurance. "My poor mamma made me take copies of all the letters that were sent about me to England in the last ship, for fear anything should happen to them, and that I might find myself at a loss on arriving here as to where I was to go, and what I was to do. That would have been terrible, you know! But dear mamma thought of everything!"

And, furtively dashing away the tears that dimmed her eyes, for she thought it would be too cruel to add to the sorrow of poor aunt Barbara by her own, she crossed the room to the table on which Mrs. Mills had deposited her carpet bag before she betook herself to the bench on the top of the staircase, and, hastily unlocking it, drew from its recesses a packet of papers carefully enveloped in an oil-skin case.

"Now then, dear aunts, we shall see all about it," said the totally unsuspecting Judith, returning to her seat on the sofa; "and we must all of us try, you know, to do everything that poor mamma wished to be done, and that will be the best way of keeping us from being too melancholy."

The sight of this packet of papers was decisive. Miss Barbara instantly saw the necessity of backing out of her rashly conceived project of monopoly, and, retaining no greater reserve of manner towards her offending sister than might suffice to make her comprehend how deeply she felt her want of sisterly hospitality, she said, "I am very glad, my dear Judith, to see that you are so tidy, and so careful. Let me look at the letters, my dear. I dare say my sister, Elfreda, will like to look at them too, melancholy as they are!"

"Yes," observed Miss Elfreda, drily, "I shall certainly like to see the copy of the letter you have destroyed, sister Barbara, because it is to that I am referred by our sister Maitland for instructions respecting her child. But it is as well that I should peruse it with my own eyes, if you please, for fear your feelings should again overpower you, and lead to your throwing the copy into the fire, as well as the original."

Miss Barbara was, for the moment, completely overpowered, completely subdued—and she obeyed her sister's behest, and handed the packet to her without replying a word.

Miss Elfreda lost no time in making herself acquainted with the contents, and perused the important document addressed to her sister with the most lively most perceptible satisfaction.

"This is exactly what it ought to be," she said, laying the open letter on the lap of her niece. "You had better read it too, Judith, that there may be no more mistakes."

"I have not only read it, but written it, dear aunt," replied Judith, "for it was I, myself, who made the copy. Mamma wished me to know everything she had written, in order that I might conform myself the more easily to her wishes, which were so full of love and kindness for me that——"

And if nobody else was overcome by this testamentary document, poor Judith was, for she now for the first time since her arrival gave way to her sorrow, and wept heartily.

But the burst was as short as it was vehement, which will generally be found in all cases of youthful sorrow, where the feeling is perfectly genuine. Should there be any, the very slightest mixture of display, it lasts much longer.

"And which kind aunt will take me first?" said she, hastily pocketing her handkerchief, and looking cheerfully, first into one face, and then into the other.

"I should say that the elder aunt should have the preference," said Miss Elfreda, who wisely determined to smooth all difficulties, and to enjoy her triumph meekly; "I should certainly say that you ought to go first to my sister Barbara, was it not for the convenience of your staying in town in order to see that all your luggage is right."

"If aunt Barbara likes to have me first," said Judith, who felt at that moment that one new place was just as good as another new place, "if aunt Barbara likes to take me home with her, my luggage need not make any difference. I have got a list of it all here, and somebody can be hired, you know, to see that it is all right."

Miss Barbara looked at Miss Elfreda, and Miss Elfreda looked at Miss Barbara.

The younger sister felt very forcibly that she stood in so very advantageous a position, that she might arrange matters pretty much

as she liked, with very little risk of being contradicted. That letter, as well as the destruction (or concealment) of it, must be forgotten before the elder could have any chance of standing upon an equal footing with her; and there was no danger, at present, that any such oblivion should fall upon the transaction.

Miss Elfreda felt this strongly, and so did Miss Barbara too.

But while this weakened the nerves and almost the faculties of the unfortunate senior, those of the junior were sharpened and invigorated by it, and it took but a few minutes to suggest to her the advantage of letting the young stranger's first abode be in the house of her sister. This would give her time to prepare herself in every way. The child, too, would be six months older, if they divided the year in half, and, perhaps, she might look a little more womanly; moreover, the Lord Chancellor would, by that time, have been made acquainted with the real state of the case, and no difficulty of any kind was likely to interfere with a fair and equal division of Judith's company and Judith's income.

Having come to this decision, there was no difficulty in acting upon it.

"Well, then! you shall go to your aunt Barbara first, my dear," said Miss Elfreda, rising to take her leave. "This is the twenty-first of October; six months from this time will be the twenty-first of April, and by that time, my dear child, I will take care to be in every way ready to receive you. You need be under no anxiety as to your journey from Westhampton to London, for I shall come down myself in order to escort you up. And now, good-by, my dear. I don't think I can be of any further service to you, just at present; and my sister Barbara looks as if she had got the head-ache, poor thing. A little agitated, perhaps. All very natural. But every thing will go right now, that we have got you between us, safe and well, my dear Judith, safe and well! That's the great thing, you know. Isn't it, sister Barbara?"

This appeal was answered by the highly incensed Miss Jenkyns, by her saying, with great solemnity, "It ought to be, sister Elfreda, and therefore I hope it is!"

Judith looked puzzled; but the next moment explained the mystery to herself, by deciding, in her young heart, that they were both of them very kind souls, and only too anxious about her.

"My eldest aunt is, I suspect, rather of a melancholy turn," thought she. "I must try to make her laugh a little sometimes." Her youngest aunt, however, seemed to require no such lesson, for she appeared exceedingly well inclined to laugh already; but by the time she had re-adjusted her shawl, and ascertained, by the help of the looking-glass, that her bonnet was in the right place, she had recovered her gravity sufficiently to say, in a very affectionate tone,

"You will write to me now and then, my dear Judith; you must not forget that!" And then, having given her a kiss, she nodded gaily to Miss Barbara, and uttering a sort of merry "Good-by!" that might do for both, she disappeared.

CHAPTER X.

THE exit of Miss Elfreda was a triumphal one, and would have been still more so, could she have known how really sorry the young Judith felt at seeing her go away. There were, indeed, several very natural reasons for this. She had been the first to stretch out a friendly hand to her, at the almost awfully anxious moment of first putting her feet upon the new and strange land that was to be her future home. Besides, she had really recalled the idea of her dear lost mother, and that at a moment when she was not in the mood to make any saucy comparisons for the disadvantage of the spinster aunt. Add to which, Miss Elfreda, though decidedly plain, was not grim-looking. And all this together was quite enough to make Judith feel sorry when the door closed behind her.

At that moment, however, by far the best friend Judith had was in her own bosom. The little girl had faith in herself. "I shall do very well, I dare say," thought she. "I can read, and I can work, and I can draw, and I can sing. But, about the singing, I don't know. Perhaps she would say I was making a noise, and she would not like that, I am sure; and if so, I must go into the fields and sing."

"Do you feel tired, my dear?" said Miss Barbara, wishing to commence a little friendly conversation.

"Oh dear! no, aunt!" responded Judith, with great alacrity; "I am not the least tired in the world; I should like to take a walk with you of all things, if you wish it. You can't think how I long to see everything."

"I don't think we can take a walk here, my dear," returned Miss Jenkyns, rising,

and looking once again out of the dismal window. "Young ladies of fashion never, I believe, walk about the streets of London, unless they have a footman with them. When we get to dear charming Westhampton, I shall be able to take you out with me without the least scruple."

"There are no such things as palanquins in England, are there, aunt?" inquired Judith.

"Oh dear! no, my dear, nothing of the kind. That sort of thing would be considered quite as a trait of savage life here. You will find everything so perfectly regular and proper in England, especially in our part of it, which is one of the finest ecclesiastical establishments in the world, that you may walk about by day, or by night either almost, without there being the very slightest danger or impropriety."

"At night?" said Judith, "Have you no carriages, aunt?"

"Carriages? Oh, yes! there are plenty of carriages, my dear, for those who can afford to keep them," replied Miss Barbara.

"And I suppose everybody, excepting very poor people, can afford that, aunt Barbara?" returned Judith, smilingly.

Miss Jenkyns, instead of replying, stirred the fire. She was, to say the truth, perfectly overpowered by this observation, for it was quite evident from it that Judith expected the accommodation of a carriage; and, if so, what was to become of all her plans for saving? Let the allowance be what it might, the expense of a carriage, horses, and coachman would infallibly swallow the whole. She was terrified, and, in order to avoid the subject, began talking of her hopes that the agent would not be very long before he got her luggage through the Custom-house.

"And poor dear Mrs. Mills?" suddenly exclaimed Judith. "I wonder what is become of her! May I go and look for her, aunt Jenkyns?"

"We will ring, my dear, we will ring;" and Miss Barbara Jenkyns did ring; but, when the door was opened by the waiter, the only word she uttered distinctly was "carriage."

"A fly, ma'am, or a cab?" demanded the waiter.

Shocked by her own absence of mind and want of self-command, Miss Barbara Jenkyns made a great effort to recover herself, and said, "That is not what I rang for. I want to know—this young lady wants to know—

where the person who came with her, the servant, I mean—she wants to know where she is gone to?”

“She is not gone anywhere, ma’am,” replied the waiter. “When she left here, she seated herself upon the settee at the top of the stairs, and there she has staid ever since.”

“That must be very uncomfortable!” exclaimed Judith, sorrowfully. “Poor dear Mrs. Mills! May I go to her, aunt?”

“Yes, certainly, my dear, if you wish it.” Judith did wish it, and accordingly left the room.

“Keep a carriage!” murmured Miss Barbara, the moment she found herself alone. “There is something quite terrifying in the idea. Though, to be sure, nobody can deny that it would be a great comfort, and give great dignity too. Just what the house deserves. Except Dr. Wroughtley’s, ours—mine, I mean—is the only really good house in the place that does not keep a carriage; Dr. Wroughtley might find it a great convenience. But, in that case, the Chancellor must be made to understand——”

And then, and thenceforward, the very heart and soul of Miss Barbara Jenkyns fixed themselves with indescribable firmness and pertinacity upon the ways and means by which a suitable carriage allowance might be extorted from the Lord Chancellor.

The variety of her stratagems and devices upon the concocting such a document as would best ensure success was by no means exhausted when Judith re-entered the room, followed by Mrs. Mills.

There had been something in the nature of the musing which had occupied Miss Barbara’s imagination during her absence that had tended very greatly to increase her affection for her niece, and this was manifested by her springing up to meet her, and by her exclaiming in an animated tone, while stretching out her two hands in an attitude of most affectionate welcome,

“Is there anything, my dear love! that I can do to assist you?”

Judith looked a little surprised, but immediately replied, with a good-humoured smile, “Yes, indeed, aunt! you will assist me very much if you will tell me how I can best manage so as to send my good kind Mrs. Mills to Scotland.”

“To Scotland, my dear child? It is a very expensive journey, Judith, and I don’t think the Lord Chancellor will consider it right to

make any especial provision for that sort of thing. What was the precise engagement, Judith?”

“The Lord Chancellor?” cried Judith, laughing. “Oh, aunt! I don’t think we need trouble the Lord Chancellor about that. And I did not mean to ask you about the cost of it; that is of no great consequence; but I am so ignorant of everything about travelling in England, that I want your instructions as to the manner in which we are to set about obtaining a conveyance for her.”

There had been something so youthful, almost so childish, in Judith’s manner of presenting herself, that the tone in which she now spoke of that most important business in life, the spending money, considerably alarmed her prudent and nicely calculating aunt Barbara, and the pause she felt it necessary to make before she replied to her question appeared so long to the impatient heiress, that she turned from her aunt to Mrs. Mills, and said—

“My dear good woman! Don’t be frightened! I don’t believe that you will find either danger or difficulty in getting to your daughter at Glasgow; for I have read a great deal about Scotland, and though I know that you can’t be carried along quite as comfortable as we are in India, I am quite sure that there is nothing to prevent your getting there perfectly well. Perhaps, dear aunt, the best way will be to ask the keeper of the hotel something about it?”

“There is no occasion whatever, my dear child, to give yourself that trouble,” returned Miss Barbara, recovering her self-possession, and by no means wishing that her niece should discover, either on this or any other occasion, that she could do without her assistance. “I can tell you everything you wish to know as to the proper manner of sending Mrs. Mills to Scotland. She will go, of course, by a second-class train, and may take her luggage with her to the station when she sets off herself. We are close to it here.”

“Really!” exclaimed Judith, looking and feeling exceedingly comforted. “Then we shall both set off together, for we must both wait for our boxes, you know. I wonder, aunt, whether it would be possible for me to have another room here for a few minutes? Mrs. Mills and I have been such dear friends during the voyage that we must not part without having a little *tête-à-tête* by way of leave-taking. Let us go and ask that man

that seems always standing at the top of the stairs." And so saying, Judith passed her arm under that of her humble friend, and took her out of the room before Miss Barbara had found time to make up her mind as to the best way of offering her advice and assistance in the matter.

She might have been more prompt, perhaps, had she been fully aware of what the nature of the interview was likely to be. The kind-hearted, thoughtful, and indulgent friend who had managed all the arrangements for sending the young Judith to her father-land was determined that the poor child, whom he considered as a young thing by no means deficient in understanding, should not be tormented on arriving by finding herself under the immediate necessity of asking the first stranger who claimed relationship with her for money. He had, therefore, placed in her hand at parting a bag containing a hundred English sovereigns, telling her, moreover, that they would not be wanted for the payment of any accommodation on board, as everything of that kind would be amply paid beforehand. Neither was it to be expended for any necessary outlay upon her arrival in England, because her aunts would be sure to take good care that she wanted nothing.

"Then what is it for, my dear sir?" said Judith, laughing.

"You will find out yourself, my dear, quicker than I could tell you; for it might take me a long time, perhaps, to call to mind all the little whims and fancies that may find their way into such a head as yours, Miss Judith. But yet I am ready to make you a bet, if you will take it, that some day or other you will tell me that I was right."

Judith, however, very discreetly declined the bet, observing, with a very sapient nod of her young head, that she thought it very likely he knew more about such matters than she did. And now she gratefully remembered the words of her kind old friend as she led the gentle, observant attendant of her tedious voyage out of the room, with the consciousness that she could make her the happy bearer of a little offering to the industrious mother of the grandchildren she had so often talked about during the voyage, without being obliged to trouble her anxious fidgetty-looking aunt Barbara on the subject.

But although Judith did not at that moment know the value of a golden sovereign so well as she learned to do afterwards, she

already began to feel too much respect for it to indulge herself in unmeasured munificence. The very pleasure she felt in putting ten of her precious little counters into the hand of Mrs. Mills restricted her from putting more, and the look of delight and astonished gratitude with which those were received gave the young heiress her first practical lesson on the value of the current coin of Great Britain.

She soon discovered, also, that Miss Barbara Jenkyns was quite right in pronouncing that the setting off from London upon a journey to Glasgow was a very easy business. The getting the luggage, too, was easy; everything was easy; and Judith reached Westhampton with the conviction, that though the sky of her ancestors was rather chilling as to its atmosphere, and rather dim as to its light, it approached in many respects most wonderfully to that land of fairy where to will and to do was one and the same operation.

CHAPTER XI.

MISS BARBARA JENKYNs had been a good deal vexed during the interval which had elapsed between her leaving her own mansion and her returning to it; nevertheless, when she found herself seated *tête-à-tête* with her precious young niece over the tea-table on the evening after her return, she felt all the comfort of having done a great deal of business, and having done it well. For after all Miss Elfreda's bustling activity and cunning stratagems, she had been unable to delay for a single hour the arrival of Judith at Westhampton; and possession being as many points of the law as she could reasonably hope for, had she not the best possible reason to be satisfied?

As to the pretty Judith herself, and the degrees of possible pleasure or probable pain which she was likely to be impressed with, Miss Barbara had as yet thought little. That the allowance she was to bring with her was the most important part of the business appeared to her a truth so exceedingly obvious, as to have rendered the mixing up any other consideration with it a sort of weakness of which Miss Barbara felt herself to be utterly incapable. The only thoughts or opinions which had as yet suggested themselves to her by looking at her niece, were, first, that she was most wonderfully like her mother; and, secondly, that she looked older, and more nearly grown-up, than she had either ex-

pected or wished for. However, she felt certain that, look as she would, she could not possibly be much above fifteen, and therefore, as she really was a child, it signified very little how she looked. There were five or six years of minority before them—that was the great matter; and, moreover, she was very deeply impressed with the value of the adage, “forewarned is fore-armed;” and upon the strength of this she felt considerable confidence in her own power of preventing any such early misadventures as had befallen her sisters.

“No young lady committed to my care will ever marry her drawing-master,” muttered Miss Barbara, as she concluded her cogitations by comfortably settling her head upon her pillow, preparatory to exchanging her anxious thoughts for the future for a good night’s sleep after her journey.

The first sensations of Judith on awaking the next morning were not gay, nor, to say truth, in any way very agreeable. The novelty of the voyage, the vague uncertainty concerning everything that was to come after it, and the bewildering excitement of her arrival, with the novelty of every object that she looked upon, had kept her mind ever since the day of her embarkation in a state of suspense and uncertainty concerning the future, which had effectually prevented her ever having yet made up her mind to think herself either happy or the reverse.

In fact, it would have been quite in vain, had she attempted, to form any judgment as to the future, for no feature of it had as yet become visible to her. Had she been a little farther advanced in age, or possessed only a little more experience concerning the world and its ways, she could scarcely have failed to find food for hoping for a pleasant future in the consciousness of possessing youth, health, wealth, and beauty. But as yet she had reasoned upon none of these good things, any more than upon the sundry other evil things which were likely enough to beset her, as well as many other of her fellow-creatures.

But notwithstanding all this mental blindness, she was quite aware of the fact that the objects upon which she opened her eyes on the morning which succeeded her arrival at Westhampton were very different from all that had welcomed her waking in her eastern home, and, in her opinion, much less agreeable. The shutters of her two rather small sash windows were not closed, but a pair of dingy red moreen curtains had been let down

over them, leaving just sufficient light to show her a dismal, though neat enough, looking room, about sixteen feet square, with a bit of faded carpet before the little toilet-table, and a bit of faded oil-cloth before the little washing-stand. There were, moreover, six red-bottomed chairs, and a little round table large enough to sustain a moderate-sized work-box; and, though she raised herself and sat upright in her bed, she could see nothing else.

The room in which she remembered to have slept in India, as long as she remembered any thing, was certainly as unlike this as it was well possible for one bed-room, containing the obviously necessary articles of furniture, to be to another which might be said to contain the necessary articles of furniture also. It had never been intended, or thought of, to make the little girl’s room in her early home either beautiful or luxurious; and yet, somehow or other, when compared with that she now looked upon, it seemed to have been both. At any rate, the draperies which formerly surrounded her were of soft muslin instead of stiff moreen, and what was almost darkness in England had only been shade in India,—not to mention the closet-like size of her present apartment when compared with that she had left.

“It cannot be helped!” whispered Judith with a sigh, as she laid herself down again on her too soft pillow. “I am in England now, and should not get back again to poor dear India, if I passed every hour of my life in wishing for it. I wonder whether I am to get up by myself? or whether I am to lie still in this odd-looking bed till somebody comes to take me out of it?”

All doubt on this point, at least, was speedily removed by a little tap at the door, and the appearance immediately afterwards of Miss Barbara’s housemaid.

“Are you come to wake me?” said Judith, smiling. “I have been awake a great while, and shall be very glad to get up.”

“Can I help you, Miss?” returned Susan, with the cheerful alacrity of a good-tempered girl, delighted at the idea of having something younger and gayer than her old mistress to wait upon and gossip with.

“Indeed you can help me,” said Judith, again jumping up in her bed, but looking round her in a very helpless sort of style, and evidently at a loss as to what she was to do first by way of assisting herself. “I don’t

see any bath, Susan. Did not aunt Barbara call you Susan?"

"Yes, Miss, my name is Susan. But I don't know what you mean, Miss, by a bath in a bed-room. In this country we always goes down to the sea-side when we wants bathing," replied the laughing girl.

"Nonsense, Susan! You don't mean to tell me that English people never wash themselves excepting in the sea, do you?" said Judith, with an evident inclination to be as merry as the maid.

"Wash? Oh! my goodness forbid that we should not wash!" And, so saying, Susan seized upon the little washing-stand, and placed it as nearly as might be in the middle of the room.

"And that's what you call a bath, is it, Susan?" cried Judith rather dolefully; "then I am sure I don't know what is to become of me, for I never got up in my life without being splashed all over with water from head to foot."

"Well! to be sure! And you such a grown up lady! Why it is enough to make you catch your death, Miss!" returned Miss Barbara's handmaid, shuddering. "My Missis would be frightened out of her seven senses if she could hear you."

"Then we must take care that she does not hear me," said Judith, "for I would not frighten her for the world, if I could help it. But you do not look so—so frightenable as my aunt does, dear Susan; and therefore you must help me—you must indeed!"

"And so I will, Miss, to the very best of my power," returned the girl, eagerly, "only I don't know how. What is it that you want me to do, my dear young lady? Only tell me, and you shall see if I do not set about it with right good will. But how to get you splashed all over up here, and that too without Missis finding us out, I don't know, and that's the truth, Miss."

"What is the biggest thing you have got in the house, Susan, that is made to hold water?"

"The boiler, Miss,—yes, it must be the boiler, Miss; out and out, that is the biggest," replied Susan, with decision.

"But I do not want to be boiled, Susan," replied Judith, laughing; "I only want to be bathed."

The conversation then took a graver tone, and Susan was at length made to comprehend enough of the usual habits of the young stranger to enable her to conceive it to be

possible that she might, by the exercise of a good deal of ingenuity and the abduction of a washing-tub, be able to render her some assistance; but she would not promise this without receiving another promise in return, by which Judith covenanted that if she were permitted the free use of water for the purpose of "splashing herself all over," her aunt Barbara should know nothing about it.

Judith gave the promise, though it was not very easy to make her understand the necessity of it; but, at length, the earnest seriousness of poor Susan convinced her that it was no jesting matter, and that, let the mysterious reason be what it might, it would certainly be a very rash and unwise act were she to give Miss Barbara Jenkyns reason to suspect that she insisted upon having more water to perform her ablutions than this exemplary relative deemed necessary for her own use.

This difficult business being settled, Judith was at length persuaded to remember how much time they had wasted in talking, and that if she did not wish to see "Missis" as cross as two sticks, it would be highly advisable to make her appearance in the parlour with as little farther delay as possible.

I fully intend to make Judith Maitland the heroine of this present chronicle, and I am, therefore, almost ashamed to confess how very much better and happier she felt in consequence of the conversation above described. It is quite impossible that she could have been a "superior-minded" girl, for if she had she could scarcely have felt her "bosom's lord sit lightly on its throne," solely because she had found an opportunity for enjoying an hour's familiar gossip with an ignorant little housemaid, who had nothing on earth to recommend her but good humour and a laughter-loving vein. Yet so it was.

The heavy misfortunes which had fallen upon Judith during the last few months that she had been resident in India had been felt by her with all the severity of mental suffering which such bereavements must almost inevitably produce on every human heart. At any rate, they did produce on that of Judith an agony of sorrow first, and a melancholy sense of bereavement afterwards, which, if they had long endured, would probably have caused her to follow to an early tomb the dear ones whose loss had left her so very desolate.

But the daily rising of heaven's glorious sun is not a more assured nor a more bene-

volent manifestation of the bounteous providence of the Creator, than is the sure yet silent influence of every passing hour in chasing such dark sorrows from our hearts, and restoring us again to hope, and even joy.

So had it been with Judith, although she was scarcely aware that so it was; for had any cruel voice at any moment rehearsed to her the dismal catalogue of her heavy losses, she would again have wrung her hands and wept in agony, and have felt as ready to declare as at the first hour in which she became certain that the last worst blow, her mother's death, had fallen upon her, that she never, never could know happiness again.

But whatever faults might be attributed to poor Judith, falsehood was not among them. What she did feel, she might not always have the discretion to conceal with as much prudence as might have been convenient, but no one could justly accuse her of having ever affected to feel what she did not. This is praise; and it is, perhaps, the highest that I could with truth bestow upon her at that period of her existence, for the vehemence of her indignant feelings upon witnessing any thing like injustice, or oppression, towards those whose position exposed them to it, seemed rather like the result of temperament than of virtue; and as for the good-natured propensities which led her to be kind and pleasure-giving to those she liked, though they might be traced to a happy healthful disposition, could scarcely at this early untried period of her existence be classed as high moral qualities. Still less, perhaps, can I display as a claim to admiration and esteem that light gaiety of temper which led her, as I have said above, to feel better and happier for her conversation with her aunt Barbara's housemaid.

Nevertheless, I may excuse her for it a little. It was truly the first time she had laughed since her mother's death, and though she did not remember the fact, and would probably have burst into tears had she thought of it, the sensation was pleasant to her. And when she had made her little toilet, though it was done in a great hurry, and under the great disadvantage of finding that everything she wanted was locked up and its place utterly forgotten, she looked so very pretty and so very nice, that even the sedate Miss Barbara could not resist a slight expression of surprise and admiration as she entered the parlour.

"Dear me! how very much better you look, my dear. I suppose that is because you

have had such a nice night's rest. A comfortable bed, and a comfortable bed-room, my dear Judith, are excellent restoratives after all the miseries you must have been exposed to during your long voyage, and I am truly glad to see that you have profited so well by them."

Judith's comical thoughts instantly reverted to the exceeding ugliness of her musty-looking old bed-room, and to the funny little washing-stand set forth in the middle of it, by way of a bath, by Susan, and she laughed again.

But not even the sensitive Miss Barbara herself could see offence in that laugh. It was so bright, so joyous, so almost child-like in its genuine merriment, that the good lady was very near laughing too. But ere her soberly-mannered lips so far forgot their lifelong education as to smile without well knowing why, a very melancholy thought suggested itself to her, which instantly checked the novel propensity. "Mercy upon me!" she inwardly exclaimed, "what is to become of me if she turns out to be as pretty, or prettier, than her foolish mother, or her still more foolish aunt Penelope? What is to become of the carriage, and Dr. Wroughtley, and all the rest of the comforts I have been thinking about? But she shan't run off with a drawing-master, at any rate. I'll take care of that."

Had Judith stood waiting for the ripening of Miss Barbara's incipient smile, she might have felt herself a good deal puzzled by the sudden change in the expression of her features, but, fortunately, this did not happen, for Miss Barbara Jenkyns possessed a parrot. It was a present from Dr. Wroughtley, and valued accordingly; and just at the moment when the dreadful consciousness of Judith's unwelcome prettiness burst upon her, the bird suddenly rolled himself round by means of the spherical wire contrivance, which was suspended from the roof of his cage, and uttered a very articulate "Good morning!"

This was quite enough to make Judith forget all the aunts in the world, and she was beside his cage in a moment.

"Oh, you beautiful darling!" she exclaimed, which was followed on her part by a series of those inimitable and extraordinary sounds by which parrot-lovers constantly propitiate the tribe.

The bird, who was of a somewhat proud and haughty nature, as the pet parrot of a Miss Barbara might naturally be expected to

be, received the first overtures of Judith rather coldly, making its sidelong steps along its fine expanse of perch in a direction exactly contrary to her wishes, which would have brought him in all his splendour towards her, and given his gaily-dizened head to her caresses.

"Cross bird! cross bird!" cried Judith, and then again she began her clicking and mooing, and offered the tip of her taper finger to scratch him in so very inviting a manner, that he seemed unable to resist any longer, and approached her with a movement considerably more rapid than that by which he had retreated.

"Oh, you darling!" was her next exclamation; upon which the parrot solemnly bent his head, and repeated the word "Darling." Judith was in ecstasies, and, suddenly turning round towards the breakfast-table, she darted towards the sugar-basin, and seizing upon two of the largest lumps it contained—they were not very large—returned with them to the cage, and presented them to her new acquaintance, with every species of endearment most likely to be acceptable to a parrot.

Up to this point Miss Barbara had been, not an indifferent, but a tranquil spectator of the scene; but Judith had now gone too far.

"No! if you please, ma'am, no!" rather shrieked than said Miss Barbara. "It is what I have never allowed from anybody, since the hour the poor beast was given to me!" And having said this, though not in time to prevent the sugar from entering between the wires of the cage, she set herself down at the breakfast-table literally pouting with agitation. Had Dr. Wroughtley himself been the object of Judith's tender attentions, Miss Barbara could scarcely have appeared more vehemently agitated than she looked and felt at that moment.

"Don't you like that people should love your parrot, aunt Barbara?" said Judith, with a merry smile, yet not quite without some slight feeling of alarm, lest she should have done what was considered as prejudicial to the favourite's health.

Miss Barbara made a great effort to control her feelings, and so far succeeded as to reply, comparatively, with composure—

"Love him, niece Judith? oh dear, no! of course I have no objection that people should love him, and, indeed, I don't see how any body can help it, such a very beautiful creature as he is. But I don't choose that any

body's love should interfere with my management of him, my dear. He was given to me by a very particularly dear friend, and I feel it to be a sort of duty that I owe to him, to take the very greatest care that nobody should feed him but myself. It is not everybody that understands the nature of parrots."

"Then I shall never be able to make him love me, aunt Barbara," returned Judith; "for though I am rather inclined to be fond of animals, I have generally had the vexation of finding, that the most certain way of making them fond of me in return was by feeding them. They don't seem to care much for anything else."

"Well, never mind, my dear, I dare say that some day or other, when you are older, and may have gained the friendship and regard of some one who wishes to please you, it may be your good fortune, as you see it has been mine, to receive the same sort of affectionate present; and whenever this happens, my dear, you will have the right to do exactly what you like with it. That will be time enough for you to begin studying about the best way of making anything fond of you. Shall I give you some sugar in your tea, my dear?"

"Yes, if you please, aunt," replied the young heiress, with a scarcely audible little sigh, generated by the melancholy intimation that it would be necessary to grow old before anything could be fond of her. But though this thought was certainly sad enough to make any young lady sigh, it is probable that the gay and sanguine temper of Judith prevented her giving any very implicit faith to this axiom, for she smiled merrily again the very next moment, as she said, "Did you teach your parrot, aunt, to call you darling? Or did your friend teach it to him beforehand, on purpose to please you?"

There is a very remarkable difference between the blush of a young lady, and that of a lady who is no longer young. In the first case, it speaks an immense variety of unutterable things; in the last, it almost always seems mixed with a little indignation, and this was so decidedly the case in the present instance, that Judith must have been positively frightened at the effect of her question, had she not been one of the most fearless little creatures in existence. Miss Barbara recovered herself, however, by a strong effort, and replied, with a very tolerable degree of composure, "Upon my word, my dear, I don't remember anything about it."

Thus ended all discussion about the parrot, for a feeling greatly resembling natural instinct prevented Judith from again interfering, in any way, between Miss Barbara and her bird.

The conversation during the remainder of the time allotted to breakfast was devoted to descriptive sketches of the admirable society of the Close by the aunt, and a few rather *mal à propos* questions from the niece; but, on the whole, it went off very well, for Judith listened with considerable interest to Miss Barbara's assurances that, in coming to stay with her, she had ensured to herself the advantage of beginning life by being introduced to the most delightful society, beyond all comparison, that either England or any other country in the world could furnish; and, as Judith listened with the unscrupulous faith of perfect ignorance, no observations were offered on her part, calculated to interrupt the charming serenity of spirits with which Miss Jenkyns always dwelt on this subject.

Had Dr. Wroughtley been a few years younger, or Judith Maitland a few years less young, this delightful serenity might, perchance, have been less perfect; but as it was, the only link of connexion which suggested itself as possible between her friend and her niece was, that the latter might pay for a carriage, and Dr. Wroughtley might ride in it.

CHAPTER XII.

"WHERE do you keep your books, aunt?" inquired Judith, when at length Miss Barbara rose to quit the breakfast-table.

"In my own study, my dear," was the reply.

"And what room may I sit in? I must not give up working, you know, for I am afraid I am very backward," said Judith.

"Give up working! No, indeed, that would be a great pity, and I should be very sorry if you thought of such a thing. Nothing is more ladylike, especially for young people, than nice work; and if you really are backward, I think I must get good Mrs. Eccles, who is the very kindest person in the world, to give you a few lessons. Her tent-stitch is quite perfect."

"But it is not stitching that I mean, aunt," said Judith. "I dare say I can stitch well enough—anybody can do that, you know. But I am behindhand in my reading. You would be frightened if you knew how very very little I know about history. What will

you say to me, if I confess to you that I believe that almost all my notions about English history have been got out of Shakspeare?"

Judith laughed as she said this, but she blushed too, for she was quite in earnest; but, luckily for her, perhaps, Miss Barbara comprehended neither the nature nor the extent of the turpitude thus honestly confessed; if she had, it is more than probable that the imprudent little heiress would have had a good many difficulties to contend with, before she again found herself at liberty to follow her own fancy in any of her studies. But Miss Barbara Jenkyns, though she had very often heard Shakspeare mentioned, and moreover possessed, in consequence of her arrangement with Miss Elfreda, a very handsome octavo edition of his works,—notwithstanding all this, Miss Barbara knew no more about what a young lady might learn, or might not learn, from his pages, than of what might be found either in Plato or Tom Moore. Controversial divinity was her favourite study, and wherever this happens to be the case, it will be generally found that it renders the mind unapt to enter with any great vivacity upon any other. Her answer, therefore, to the confession of Judith, was a very gentle one.

"Well, my dear," said she, "all you can do now, you know, is to inquire about the best books that young ladies ought to study upon all subjects; and now you are come to England, and especially now you are come to Westhampton, you will be sure to hear exactly what is most right and proper for you in every way. It will be a very great advantage for you, Judith, to have the honour and happiness of being introduced, as I am sure I shall try that you shall be, to the Dean and the Prebends; but the greatest blessing of all, my dear child, will be for you to know Dr. Wroughtley. There is nothing, no, nothing in the whole world, that you could ask his opinion about, that he would not be able to answer in the most superior way. It will be an advantage, my dear, won't it, to have such a friend as that to talk to you?"

"Yes, indeed, aunt! It would be an advantage to any one, but especially to a girl as ignorant as I believe I am—only—" said Judith, and there she stopped.

"Only what? Speak out, my dear. Don't be afraid to tell me whatever you may happen to have in your head, particularly about Dr. Wroughtley. Tell me everything, my dear."

"Thank you, aunt; I'm sure you are very kind. What I have in my head now is, that I should think so very clever a man as Dr. Wroughtley would find it a great bore if I asked him to tell me all that I want to know."

"And so he might, my dear,—I dare say he might. I won't pretend to say but that he might think it troublesome," replied Miss Barbara slowly, and with an expression of very deliberate reflection on her features, "if any other young lady, that is to say, any young lady not so nearly related to me, were to give him this trouble. But Dr. Wroughtley and I are very old friends, Judith, and I feel certain,—at least I am sure I may say that I feel almost certain,—of his answering with the very kindest condescension any questions which you will tell me to ask him."

"Thank you, aunt," said Judith, bending her head to adjust the ends of the ribbon that encircled her neck, so that her rich brown ringlets almost covered her face. "But I must not keep you standing in this way listening to my idle talk. May I go with you into your study to look for a book to read?—I dare say Susan will help me to unpack my trunks by-and-by, and then I shall get at my drawing things."

"Do you draw?" demanded Miss Barbara, with a degree of solemnity that nearly approached sternness. "Do you draw, Judith?"

"Yes, I do. I am very fond of it," replied Judith, looking surprised. "Is it wrong? I am sure I hope not, for I love it dearly."

"I don't know about wrong. That's as it may be," replied her aunt, knitting her brows. "In any other family, perhaps, it would not so much signify, but to us." And here Miss Barbara stopped, and very nearly groaned.

Judith was too much startled to stand upon ceremony, and therefore very explicitly demanded what was the matter.

"Matter?—There is nothing the matter, at least I mean there is nothing the matter about you, my dear. But if you do not know it already, I think it is quite right that I should tell you the dreadful mischief that the love of drawing has already produced in this house. If I had time I should like to ask Dr. Wroughtley about it first; but you look in such a hurry, my dear, that I suppose I must follow my own unassisted judgment in this, and tell you the truth at once. You have heard of your aunt Penelope, Judith?"

"Heard of her? Heard of my aunt Worthington? To be sure, aunt Barbara, I have heard of her. There was nobody in all England that poor mamma talked so much about, and what she most wished to come back for was that they might live together. Indeed, mamma told me more than once, that if aunt Penelope would not come to England to live, she would go herself to Rome rather than not be with her."

"Then I am sure it is a great blessing that,"—began the indignant Miss Barbara. But she was sufficiently discreet to stop just before she had finished the sentence, and only added in a much more tranquil voice,— "In short, my dear, it will be a very great blessing for you if you can get the advice of such a man as Dr. Wroughtley whenever you want it. You will have nothing to do but just to act exactly according as he tells you in all things, and then you at least will be safe from all danger, let you fancy yourself as fond of drawing as you will."

"But what danger can there be in my being fond of drawing, aunt Barbara, even if there were no such person as Dr. Wroughtley in the world?" said Judith, rather sturdily. "I don't understand you."

"Sit down again for a few minutes, Judith, and I will tell you. Your poor unfortunate aunt Penelope, my dear, who had exactly the same fortune that I have, and had just the same power of living like a gentlewoman to the end of her days that I have, unhappily took it into her head that she had a great taste for drawing. Nothing would satisfy her but having a drawing-master, Judith, and in an evil hour my poor dear mother consented, and that most presumptuous of men, young Worthington, was hired to instruct her in that most useless of all accomplishments. You may guess the result, my dear—that was the man she ran away with and married! That was the man who spent all her money and reduced her to absolute penury! And now, Judith, let me ask you if you can wonder at my looking terrified at the very mention of a drawing-master?"

"Reduced to penury?" repeated Judith, looking very unhappy. "Do you mean to say, aunt Barbara, that my dear mamma's beloved sister Penelope is really reduced to penury?"

"Indeed, I think I have full right to say so, after such a letter as the last we got from her. Both my sister Elfreda and myself felt shocked and indignant at the manner in which she

wrote about the man who had behaved so shamefully to us all."

"Did my uncle Worthington behave shamefully?" cried Judith. "I am very, very sorry to hear it!"

And the tears which started to her eyes showed the feeling to be genuine.

"Pray do not call that person your uncle, Miss Maitland," returned Miss Barbara with great indignation. "It is a disgrace to us all to hear you allude to him; and as to your crying about it, child, that can do no good to anybody. What is done cannot be undone, Judith, and all that we can do is to endeavour to bury the whole affair in oblivion."

"But mamma did not think it right to bury it in oblivion," cried Judith. "And before poor papa died, I well remember that they used to talk together about trying to make aunt Penelope and cousin Charles come out to India to live with them. I don't believe that mamma ever knew anything about my uncle Worthington being such a wicked man, and I am quite sure papa never did."

"You are a great deal too young, Judith, to understand anything about such matters. I have not said one word about Penelope's husband having been a wicked man. I don't suppose he was a wicked man in the sense you mean. When I said he behaved shamefully, of course I meant about his running away with my sister. And it was most shameful taking advantage so of her youth, and her silly fancy about drawing, and she having ten thousand pounds, and he nothing!"

Judith appeared perfectly satisfied by this explanation. All traces of tears disappeared from her bright eyes, as if by magic, and the said eyes only looked brighter than ever.

"Thank you, aunt!" said she, in the most cheerful accent imaginable, though she might have been rather at a loss, had she been called upon to explain why she was so grateful. However, the phrase did very well by way of giving an agreeable turn to the conversation, and even Miss Barbara herself seemed so well pleased at having got over the little difficulty of having imputed perhaps rather too much sin and iniquity to one of the most amiable and excellent men that ever lived, that she positively smiled at Judith in return, and said, in a most amiable manner, "Now, then, my dear, we will go into my study, and look for a book."

"If you please, ma'am," returned Judith, following Miss Barbara towards the door. "But before I begin to read it, I must get

you to tell me aunt Worthington's present address."

"And that I am by no means able to do, Judith. I shall think you were much more likely to know it than I am, for I believe your mamma did keep up a correspondence with her, and that is what I never did, nor Elfreda either. For what was the good of putting her to the expense of foreign postage, when we knew she had no money to pay for it? How comes it, my dear, that you do not know her address yourself, if she and your mamma always kept such great friends?"

"Because her last letter said that she and cousin Charles were going to leave Rome immediately, but that they had not quite made up their minds as to where they should go. She mentioned Paris and London as the two places between which they were doubting, but that will go but a very little way towards finding them out," added Judith, very disconsolately. "What can I do about it, aunt Barbara? I *must* find them out some way or other; for, even independent of my great and longing wish to see them, I have got all those diamonds, you know, to give aunt Penelope; and, if they are not rich, that of itself may really be a matter of importance. Indeed, aunt Barbara, I shall be perfectly miserable till I find them."

"Do not say that, Judith, because it would be very wrong to feel so. God knows always what is best for us all, and if it be his will that you should not find them out, you ought not only to submit to it patiently, but to feel a very comfortable certainty that it will be better for you that you should not."

Having pronounced these words with considerable solemnity, Miss Barbara moved on, and led the way to her study.

Judith followed her, and followed her in silence, for it was certainly evident to the meanest capacity, that nothing which she could say at that moment would be in the least degree likely to obtain what she wanted. But could Miss Barbara Jenkyns have been made aware of the burning indignation and steadfast determination which were at work in the throbbing heart of the little lady behind her, she might have suspected that the obtaining from the Lord Chancellor an allowance, which might justify even her prudence in keeping a carriage, was by no means likely to prove the most difficult part of the task which lay before her. But she was as unconscious of all this as her pet parrot could be.

CHAPTER XIII.

MISS BARBARA JENKYNs' study was not an apartment greatly calculated to enchant the eye, or cheer the spirits, of such a young lady as Miss Judith Maitland. It was precisely twelve feet square, having one window, one door, one fire-place, and one glass-covered book-case on its respective sides. It was dark, because the window was not a large window, and because there was, moreover, a thick green canvass blind to prevent any disagreeable objects, such as washing-tubs, dust-holes, and the like, from being too clearly discerned in the back court upon which it opened. A very ancient but not quite ragged Turkey carpet, exactly ten feet square, was placed with scrupulous exactness precisely in the middle of the room, which would have produced a still more chilling effect had not Dr. Wroughtley, upon becoming aware that this apartment was likely to be the scene of all Miss Barbara's privy counsellings, pretty strongly insisted upon the necessity of having a warm hearth-rug, as well as a comfortable arm-chair for the accommodation of the individual (let it be whom it might) whose advice she might deem it advisable to ask for within the shelter of this sombre retreat.

In the middle of the little carpet there was a very substantial table, rather longer than was necessary for the little writing-desk and the little work-basket which were for ever placed upon it; and there were, moreover, six black horse-hair-bottomed chairs, arranged with great attention to symmetry against the walls; and this was all that met the eye on entering the apartment, which for years had been the favourite boudoir of Miss Barbara Jenkyns.

Gay young hearts are not, perhaps, very easily made to feel that most melancholy sensation, which is described by the word "*sinking*," and the heart of Judith was by nature very gay; but it was not this gaiety of temperament which now enabled her to resist the sadly gloomy influence of this retreat, (which Miss Barbara pronounced as she entered to be her favourite sitting-room,) one half so much as the new-born principle of sturdy rebellion, which had been generated by the few words that had passed between herself and her aunt upon the subject of the Worthingtons.

The hearts of the two pretty sisters of the Jenkyns' family had probably been bound

together by more intimate sympathies than any which had ever existed between the other members of it, and this may account for the fact that Mrs. Maitland, in talking to her children of her sisters, had inspired them all with a feeling for "Aunt Worthington" much more nearly approaching affection than any which the names of "Aunt Barbara" and "Aunt Elfreda" had ever inspired. Nevertheless, the testamentary instructions left by Mrs. Maitland had so decidedly placed her sole remaining child under the care of her unmarried sisters, that this real positive tie would soon have superseded the vague remembrances of childish partiality for a relation personally unknown, had not the ill-advised Miss Barbara produced precisely the effect which she would have most earnestly wished to avoid, by exciting for her unfortunate sister Penelope a deeper interest in the heart of Judith by her harshness and injustice, than was ever likely to be set to sleep again by all the caution, all the care, or all the authority it would be in her power to exercise, though she were ten times her guardian.

But, happily for her present peace of mind, she was utterly unconscious, utterly unsuspecting, of the mischief she had done; and upon turning round to ask her niece if she did not think that little room looked very comfortable, she positively mistook her heightened colour and the dark flashing of her eye for indications of her being in great spirits, and very much delighted by every thing about her.

"But this, you must know, my dear, is my own particular snugery, where I do all my little private business about housekeeping, and serious reading, and all that; and no lady ever comes here without an invitation. However, you will be a favourite, I know that for certain, my dear, and you need not be afraid that I should ever make any objection to your coming in here to borrow a book, or to your sitting down now and then for the sake of our having a little comfortable chat together. But, of course, if you find me engaged, my dear, your own good sense and politeness will at once make you understand that it will be better to come another time."

During the whole of this speech the eyes of Judith were resolutely fixed upon the ground. She felt probably something like an instinctive consciousness that she was not in a dutiful humour, and that her aunt might

chance to find it out, if she either looked at or attempted to speak to her.

"Now then, my dear child," pursued the well-pleased and perfectly unsuspecting Miss Barbara, "now you have my free leave and permission to look over all my books, from one end of my library to the other; that is, if you think it will amuse you, for I am not in the least degree averse to young people's being amused. And more than that, Judith, I shall make no objection whatever to lending you one of them to read, if you fancy it would give you pleasure. Come and look, my dear, and tell me if there is any one of them that you would particularly wish to read."

Judith approached the book-case in silence, and, without bestowing much time in examination of the collection, she put a finger upon that part of the glass door behind which were ranged the works of Massinger, and said, "I will take a volume or two of these, if you please."

"One at a time, I should like better," replied her aunt, with a slight contraction of her brow. "One at a time will do, won't it, my dear? In my opinion, Judith, it is always best, and most proper, and most convenient too, to keep everything in its right place; and the right place for books, you know, is the book-case." And as she spoke Miss Barbara drew the key from her pocket, and applied it to the door; and then, having slowly and very carefully opened it, she raised her hand, which she held suspended for a moment as if the deed she were about were one not to be performed too hastily, and repeated with considerable solemnity "one at a time."

Judith made no reply, but stood in mute and, as her aunt might think, perhaps, in respectful expectation of whatever degree of indulgence might be accorded to her.

Miss Barbara at length drew forth the first volume of the set; but before she presented it to her niece she opened it, and after gazing upon it for a minute or two, and turning a few of the pages, she said,

"What made you ask for this book, my dear? It is a stage play, is it not? I am almost sure it is, from the manner in which it is printed; though I have never made myself very familiar with such paltry sort of reading. It is a stage play, Judith—is it not?"

"I believe so, ma'am," replied the rebellious spirit, in a tone of great indifference, and turning its naughty head the other way.

"Well, my dear little girl! it may be per-

fectly innocent, and perfectly harmless for any thing I know for certain to the contrary, for, as I said before, I have never given myself to the study of such unprofitable reading, nor was it very likely I should, being brought up from the hour of my birth in such a place as this. But still I won't say but what these ones that you have asked for may be very innocent, and if it should turn out so, I shall have no objection whatever to going on lending you one volume after another, till you have got to the end of the set, if you don't grow tired first. But I do think, Judith, that it will be my duty to make some little inquiry before you begin, for I am pretty sure that it does sometimes happen that stage plays and farces, and those sort of things, do sometimes turn out to contain things not altogether such as the Lord Chancellor might approve for you; and in that case you must be aware, my love, that instead of giving them to you it will be my duty to put them as much out of your way as possible. You can understand this, Judith, yourself, I am quite sure."

"The Lord Chancellor!" repeated Judith, in an accent expressive of great astonishment.

"Yes, of course, my dear. You surely cannot be ignorant of the very important fact that you are a ward in Chancery, Judith? Surely some one or other must have told you as much as that, young as you are."

"Yes, aunt, I knew as much as that," she replied. But though very sincerely conscious that she knew less about such matters, and indeed about many others than most girls of her age, she could not help feeling a little inclined to quiz Miss Barbara's solemnity on this occasion; nor could she, despite all the anger that still glowed in her heart, resist a smile at her pomposity as she replied, "I don't think, aunt Barbara, that the Lord Chancellor is likely to give himself much trouble about what I read."

A slight consciousness of her own absurdity caused Miss Barbara to colour a little at receiving this common-sense sort of remonstrance from her young niece; but it was not in her nature to plead guilty to this, or any other shadow of blundering, and she replied with well-sustained dignity that it might be so, but that it was always desirable that all ladies, whether young or old, should doubt their own judgment, particularly when they were so fortunate as to have male friends able and willing to give them advice.

Before Miss Barbara had fully delivered this

opinion, the thoughts of Judith were far away, and she was meditating so very earnestly on the best means of finding out her aunt Worthington, that both Massinger and the Lord Chancellor were utterly forgotten; and upon Miss Barbara's finishing her speech by saying, "Don't you think, my dear, that it would be a very good thing to consult my old friend Dr. Wroughtley about it?" she answered, "Yes, ma'am," without having the slightest idea as to what the proposal was to which she assented.

Now, it had often happened to Miss Barbara Jenkyns to meet with opposition, particularly from her sister Elfreda, when proposing to consult this same estimable divine on domestic matters, and therefore this particularly ready acquiescence on the part of Judith was most welcome to her.

"In that case, my dear love, every thing will go right, and in the mean time you may have this to amuse you," (putting a volume of the "Spectator" into her hand)—"we all know that there is no danger here. It has been a young lady's book from the time it was written."

Judith put out her hand, mechanically, to take the book, and as mechanically said, "Thank you;" and then, with a much more rapid step than she entered the room, she left it, eager to find herself in the solitude of her own little apartment, in order to meditate upon the most speedy and effectual means of doing what she was fully determined she would do, let her hard-hearted, unnatural, and most odious aunt Barbara do what she would to prevent her.

The vehemence of her feelings upon this occasion must not, however, be taken as a specimen of her temper—for Judith's temper was neither violent nor vindictive. But all her best and most natural feelings had been roused against the line of conduct that had been dictated to her. Even had she fully understood the nature of the reference which her aunt had suggested to her favourite Prebend and Doctor of Divinity, by which she proposed to make him the arbiter of all her studies, sports, and pastimes, no such vehement feelings of opposition would have arisen within her. She might probably have found some difficulty in concealing the mirth which she would have felt at such a proposal had she understood it; and she might also have been a little inclined to think that it would not much signify, for that if books were to be had she should be sure to read them, whether the

old Doctor approved it or no; but neither anger or dislike towards any body would have been brought into action thereby. But now the case was altogether different.

She had never before, perhaps, been conscious herself how perfectly well aware she was that her own dear mother had loved her sister Penelope ten thousand times more than either of her other sisters; but now she longed for nothing so much as a fitting opportunity for proclaiming this to everybody that would listen to her.

"Poor dear aunt Worthington! And because she was poor, and because she was in distress, and because she loved drawing, and had taste and good feeling enough to love talent, and to give up everything for the sake of being the wife of a man of talent,—because of all this, and for no other reason in the world, she was to be forsaken by her family, and left perhaps to starve, they knew not and cared not where!"

Such were the meditations of Judith as she stood beside her aunt Barbara before the book-case; and as she marched up the stairs with a volume of "The Spectator" in her hand, her heart was swelling with rebel resolution.

Miss Barbara, meanwhile, remained in her study, in the most happy frame of mind imaginable.

"I shall have no great difficulty in managing this poor dear child, that's quite clear."

It was thus she pleasantly pondered, as she sat herself down and opened the little writing-desk which, save on the subject of invitations given and received, was sacred to household accounts and Doctor Wroughtley.

"It is always best," she murmured, musingly, "to begin as one means to go on. No woman in the world, either married or single, ought to carry on such important affairs as I have got on my hands now, without getting a masculine judgment to help them—that is, if they have got the privilege to ask for it." And here her love of soliloquy, which she was apt to indulge in a low but not quite inarticulate murmur, stopped short, while she went to her desk and penned the following epistle to her friend:—

"My dear Sir,—I am sure you will, with your usual kindness, be glad to hear that I have brought home my young charge safely. She does not look quite so young as I expected, but I suppose that is owing to her having grown up into the same sort of slight

tall-looking figure as her poor mother. I think you will be surprised to see how tall she is—*very* nearly as tall as I am! However, she is but a child, nevertheless, in point of age, and I do assure you, my dear sir, that I feel all the weight of my responsibility very heavily. But in this case, as in so many others, I shall hope to enjoy the great advantage of your advice. I do assure you that I never wanted it more, and I feel that the privilege of asking for it is one of the greatest blessings I enjoy.

"May I, therefore, my dear Doctor, ask you to have the exceeding kindness to call on me, at any hour most convenient to you before dinner? I have not forgotten that we are to meet this evening at the Dean's, but that will give me no opportunity of asking for your opinion on one or two points in the manner I wish to do. I am afraid that I must not think of taking Judith with me to-night, for I believe it is to be a large party, and she is much too young for that. However, upon this point, as upon many others, I shall decide upon nothing without your advice.

"Yours, my dear sir,

"Ever most sincerely,

"BARBARA JENKINS.

"P.S.—I saw some particularly fine French pears at a fruiterer's in London, and I have taken the liberty of bringing you a little offering of half-a-dozen, as I have a notion that you are fond of them.—N.B. I shall not stir till I have had the pleasure of seeing you."

Dr. Wroughtley was not the man to let so devoted a friend wait vainly for him, unless some very particular engagement, such as the reading a newspaper, or a new number of "Punch" rendered his obedience to her commands impossible. But nothing of this kind interfering upon the present occasion, he remained no longer in his library after receiving Miss Jenkins' note than was necessary for the comfortable eating of two of her pears, and then set off for her mansion.

"This is kind of you, dear Doctor!" she exclaimed, as her study door opened, and his stately figure appeared within it. "I am sure I can never thank you enough for all your kindness to me! What should I do in all my little troubles if I had not you?" "Don't say a word about it, Miss Barbara," he replied, shaking her by the hand both cordially and condescendingly. "Such old friends as we are should never stand upon ceremony. Your pears are excellent, Miss

Barbara. You were quite right as to the sort. Never buy any other."

Miss Barbara was delighted, and the more so because she had in this instance permitted her judgment to decide for her without any reference to her own likings, or dislikings, simply selecting the species which was the most costly, without putting herself to the additional expense of testing the excellence of the fruit by the taste.

"Now, then. What have you got to say to me, my dear lady?" said the amiable divine, seating himself in his accustomed place near the fire, for the October air bit shrewdly. "You are going to speak a little prologue, I presume, before you bring your young *débutante* on the scene. But you must let me see her before I go. You must let me be the first to pass judgment on her."

"You shall, of course, my dear Doctor, you shall; but you must wait a little first. I positively must have your opinion upon one or two points before anything else is thought of," said Miss Barbara, advancing her own chair till it was opposite to that of her friend, and so near it that their noses were very nearly in contact.

"Begin, then. Let me hear all about it," said he, half laughing.

"You shall, you shall, never fear! I will waste as little of your precious time as possible," said she, "but I hardly know where to begin."

"How old is she?" said Dr. Wroughtley, willing to assist her by coming to the most important point at once.

"Oh! how like you that is!" exclaimed Miss Barbara. "You have named one of my greatest difficulties at the very first word. Why the fact is, Dr. Wroughtley," she continued, shaking her head rather dolorously, "she is by no means such a childish-looking little thing as I expected to see her. Time does run so fast, dear Doctor! I protest to you that I expected to see a little girl in a white frock, and instead of that she looks, comparatively speaking, quite grown up. And this, you must perceive, makes my task a great deal more difficult."

"Does it? Why so, Miss Barbara? I should think it would be just the contrary. Surely a child is the most troublesome thing one can have belonging to one. At least that's my notion."

Miss Barbara felt it was impossible to object to a sentiment so replete with bachelor wisdom, but nevertheless she ventured to say in

addition to the unavoidable, "So it is, to be sure; but still there is something in a grown-up young lady that is very troublesome too. Don't you agree to that, Dr. Wroughtley?"

"Well, I declare I don't think so," returned the Doctor, with considerable animation, "unless indeed she happens to be ugly. But yours is a handsome family, Miss Barbara. I won't believe that she can be ugly. Come, now, let me see her."

"You shall, Dr. Wroughtley, you shall. I will send for her immediately, and you will find that she is not ugly at all; I rather believe that most people would think her quite the reverse, though there is something a little odd about her, too. She has got such a queer look with her eyes sometimes. One would think she was going to read one through and through. But I don't suppose she means any thing. But the great difficulty about her being so nearly grown-up is this, Doctor. What am I to do about taking her out? What do you think it will be my duty to do?"

"Do? Why, take her every where, of course. They will only be too glad to have her. A pretty-looking young girl, with piercing eyes, and a handsome fortune, Miss Barbara, will be no very difficult guest to find a welcome for, take my word for it."

"That is very likely, Dr. Wroughtley, but that is not the difficulty. What am I to do about a carriage for her? I am sure I shall not be able to pay for one out of any allowance the Lord Chancellor is likely to make for a girl of her age. Nobody would suppose she could want such a thing."

"I don't know that, Miss Barbara," replied the learned divine, looking very intelligent. "Is the young lady rich enough to keep a carriage for herself, if she were of age?"

"Certainly she is, Dr. Wroughtley," returned Miss Barbara. "By a statement enclosed in the packet which brought me my poor sister Judith's last letter, it appears that a fortune somewhere between forty and fifty thousand pounds has become the property of this girl, who is her only surviving child. Ten thousand pounds of this was my sister's fortune, settled upon her and her children at her marriage, and this sum remains in the funds, bringing, as we all know but too well, only three per cent. interest; but the remainder of the property, which was all realized by Colonel Maitland while he was in India, is vested in good English mortgages, and

brings in a much better return. In short, from the statement sent me, which I could show you any day when you have leisure to look at it, Judith Maitland will have an income of about two thousand a-year, and of course this would justify her keeping a carriage."

"Certainly, if the young lady continued to board with her kind aunt; or if she made in any way a suitable marriage. But not only do Chancellors sometimes say '*I doubt*,' but other folks occasionally doubt Lord Chancellors. However, my dear friend, I perfectly agree with you in thinking that a carriage for her would be very agreeable and very convenient; and if the allowance made for her prove insufficient, it may very likely be increased by means of a memorial. But now let me see her, Miss Barbara. I am really growing quite impatient, and it is positive cruelty in you to keep me waiting so."

"A memorial? That is an excellent idea! And it may be stated that her Indian habits make it particularly necessary. She has been already asking me if all the people do not keep carriages!"

"Poor little lady! That is quite natural, and may, of course, be used to strengthen the memorial. Now, then, for the young lady. If you won't send for her, I must positively go for her myself."

"Upon my word, Doctor, you are as impatient as a school-boy; you shall see her presently. But there is another subject upon which it is absolutely necessary for me to hear your opinion before our present consultation is concluded. You know, I think, all the particulars of my unfortunate elder sister's imprudent marriage?" said Miss Barbara, with a deep sigh.

"All the particulars? I am not quite certain about that. But I know that she ran away with her pretty face and her pretty fortune to a man who had nothing," replied Dr. Wroughtley.

"Exactly so. But do you not know also that the man was a drawing-master?" demanded Miss Barbara, somewhat severely.

"I may have heard so," he replied; "but, upon my honour, I forget all the particulars. But never mind about all that just now, Miss Barbara; it can make no difference to your young ward, you know."

"I beg your pardon, Dr. Wroughtley; that is exactly what I do not know. Almost the only thing which this young Judith has said to me as yet about herself is, that she is very

fond of drawing, and wants to have a drawing-master. What ought I to say to her?" cried Miss Barbara, clasping her hands in great agitation.

"Why, if I were you, Miss Barbara," replied her sagacious friend, "I should tell her that I would inquire about it."

"And if I did inquire? And if a drawing-master were to be recommended to us? And if all the same sort of dreadful business were to begin over again?—oh! Dr. Wroughtley! how should I ever forgive myself?"

And Miss Barbara drew her handkerchief from her pocket as she made this touching appeal.

"What sort of a man was your sister's drawing-master?" inquired the Doctor, trying to look as grave as the Lord Chancellor himself.

"He was a very well-looking young man, certainly," she replied, "but his audacity has always made the very idea of him odious to me;" and she shuddered from head to foot as she thought of him.

"Don't agitate yourself, my dear lady, don't upon any account agitate yourself. My advice is that you should comply with the young lady's wishes, and immediately begin looking about for a drawing-master; but there will be no necessity whatever that you should find one till you are fortunate enough to encounter an artist neither so young nor so handsome as the personage who seems to have caused you so much sorrow. And now, then, what say you to sending for the young lady?"

"Why, Dr. Wroughtley, I say that I *will* send for her. But, upon my honour, you will be very much disappointed if you expect to find her sufficiently charming to justify all this impatience. There is nothing very particular about her, I assure you. Besides, really there is one of the most important questions of all I have not asked yet, and I really cannot call her down till you have heard it."

"Then I am very sorry to tell you, my dear friend, that I must go without hearing it, for I have promised Dr. Sotherton to ride with him at two," said the impatient visitor, rising suddenly.

"Two? Good gracious, Dr. Wroughtley! it is not twelve yet, I am quite sure. Do stay five minutes! only five minutes longer, just to tell me if you think I ought to let her read plays and farces, and such sort of trumpery?"

"Let me see her, and I will tell you," he

replied, looking so greatly inclined to laugh, that poor Miss Barbara felt very nearly as much inclined to cry. But she knew the ways of her excellent friend too well to be seriously angry with him, and too well also to run any risk of making him seriously angry with her. So she rang the bell, and ordered William to tell Susan to inform Miss Maitland, that she would be very much obliged to her if she would come to her in the study for a few minutes.

This message found my heroine, it must be confessed, in a frame of mind very little disposed to obedience. There was no fire in her bed-room, and she was as cold as a frog, a sensation to which she, in common with all Indian-born people, had a very particular aversion; and, moreover, poor child, she was so completely overpowered and out of spirits by finding herself totally at a loss where to address herself in order to obtain tidings of her aunt Worthington, that she told Susan, very gravely, that she did not feel well enough to go down stairs, and that she believed the best thing she could do would be to go to bed.

"Go to bed, my dear young lady! And you looking so bright and beautiful all the time! Mercy on me! If you only but name such a thing to Missis we shall have our doctor, Mr. Carey, sent for in no time, and you won't like to have physic to take. And after all, Miss, it won't never cure you of not choosing to go down stairs to your aunt when you like better to stay up in your own room."

"That is quite true, Susan," returned Judith, laughing, and losing thereby the worst symptom of her malady; "and therefore I will go down stairs at once, without calling in the assistance of your Mr. Carey. And yet I don't feel as if I should behave very well when I get there. I feel sure I shall not, Susan."

"Oh yes, you will, Miss," said Susan, encouragingly; "that is to say," she added, "if you will only just be so good as to try."

"Very true, Susan. Only if——" And with these words on her pretty curling lip, the young lady turned from the first friend she had made in England, and made her way to the study in a frame of mind little calculated to make any other.

"What a sweet pretty darling she is!" thought Susan as she looked after her. "I wonder how she will get on with our crabbed old Missis! It is like shutting up a snarling

old dog and a playful little kitten in the same cage."

Judith opened the study door very slowly and deliberately, and endeavoured to enter the room with a very womanly air, being, to say the truth, very sturdily determined to find out her aunt Worthington with as little delay as possible, and to behave like the most dutiful and affectionate niece in the world, at least to her. But she was a good deal startled by perceiving a tall and portly gentleman sitting nose and knees with her aunt over the fire, with his eyes eagerly fixed on the door.

"Oh! here you are at last, my dear," said her aunt; "and now you shall have the honour and the happiness of being introduced to my excellent friend, Dr. Wroughtley."

Judith blushed, and bowed, but spoke not.

Dr. Wroughtley looked at her for a moment, and then rising from his chair approached her, and held out his hand with great urbanity of look and manner.

Had not that look and manner been really very gracious and agreeable, Judith was just then quite capable of pretending not to see that he was offering to shake hands with her at all. As it was, however, she quite satisfied the gentleman, and almost satisfied her aunt, by the manner in which she received his civility.

The undeniable fact that it had been the ceaseless study of Dr. Wroughtley's life to make himself comfortable, by no means interfered with another fact, equally incontrovertible, that he knew how to make himself agreeable also. It must indeed be a much duller personage than our senior Prebend of Westhampton who could fail to be aware that the latter helped the former very materially. Miss Barbara herself, well as she knew him, and well as she knew also all his charming little fascinating ways, was really astonished upon the present occasion to perceive how admirably he contrived to make the young stranger forget her strangeness, and converse with him as if they had been acquainted for years.

As to the reverend gentleman himself, he seemed to have forgotten his engagement with his brother prebend, Dr. Sotherton, if indeed he had ever made it, for he went on very pleasantly for the best part of an hour, talking of India and of England, and of the wide expanse which divided them.

At last, however, his visit came to an end,

but not until he had declared that Miss Barbara Jenkyns was a very lucky lady for having been fortunate enough to import so charming an exotic.

"An old man may say what he thinks, though a young one under the like circumstances may not; and I therefore take the liberty of avowing my opinion, that a very bright star has risen upon the horizon of Westhampton," said he, with a low bow.

Having made this pretty speech, he took himself off, but not till he had given a side-long glance to Miss Barbara, which she rightly interpreted as a hint that she was to follow him out of the room; and this she did, very carefully shutting the door after her.

Dr. Wroughtley stepped on in silence before her till he reached the door of the dining-room, which he entered, followed by his anxious friend, who actually trembled as she carefully closed that door likewise, so great was her eagerness to learn what it was that the dear Doctor wanted to say to her.

"Sit down, Miss Barbara, sit down," said he, pointing to a chair near the glimmering remains of the breakfast fire. "Sit down for half a moment, and I will give you an answer in full for all the questions you have been asking me, and that is undertaking to do a good deal."

Even had this promise been as valueless as it was the reverse, Miss Barbara Jenkyns would, with almost equal alacrity, have complied with the command by obedience to which it was to be purchased, for she was never so happy as when obeying the commands of Dr. Wroughtley. So she sat down in the chair to which he had pointed, while he seated himself in another, which he placed close beside it.

"You are a very lucky person, my good friend, let me tell you that," he began; "a very fortunate person indeed, for you have a fine, intelligent, very handsome young heiress, with doubtless a very handsome allowance too, placed in your hands, with the certainty that your own always valuable society, my dear Miss Barbara, will now be considered as more valuable still, by your having it in your power to bring so brilliant an ornament into every drawing-room."

"Yes, my dear Doctor, it is certainly very lucky," she replied. "All that, certainly, is very lucky, and I know it is all very true; and by the help of a little of your kind assistance as to the best way of getting the Lord Chancellor to allow a carriage, which we

should all feel, you know, to be so very convenient, I do think that I shall find myself more comfortable, and be better off, than I ever was in my life. But that does not quite answer all the questions I have asked you about the proper way for me to manage her, you know; and particularly in respect to the manner in which I am to answer her about the books, and the drawing-master, and all that. You really must tell me exactly what I ought to do about all that sort of thing, my dear friend!"

"I will, Miss Barbara," said the Doctor, starting up with unusual agility. "I will answer every possible question of the sort at once, and by the simple injunction of one single law. Let the young lady have her own way in everything."

"Mercy on me, Dr. Wroughtley! What can you mean? But, of course, you are only joking; and yet I am sure you are too kind not to give me your serious advice whenever you think it can be useful to me. Is not that true, my dear Doctor?"

"You do me no more than justice, Miss Barbara," said he; "and the advice I give you now, I do very seriously believe to be the best I can give. There is a look in the young lady's eye,—she has very handsome eyes, Miss Barbara, very handsome."

"Yes, I dare say she has," replied the puzzled lady, utterly at a loss to guess what the Doctor was joking about, though quite sure that he was joking in some very clever way or other.

"Now, then, I will take my leave," said he. "Of course we shall meet to-night at the Deanery, and I quite envy you the pleasure of introducing your beautiful niece there. Good morning!"

"Then you really think she ought to go?" said Miss Barbara.

"It's my turn now, my good lady, to suspect a jest," he replied. "I no more believe you would think of leaving her at home, than of leaving your best cap there. Good-bye."

And the gay Doctor walked off, not to take a ride with Dr. Sotherton, but to devote the remainder of the morning to making as many visits in the Close as his rather elaborate description of the fair stranger, repeated from house to house, allowed time for.

CHAPTER XIV.

As to Miss Barbara, she was left in a state of the most genuine and complete mystifica-

tion. That so very superior a man as Dr. Wroughtley should seriously mean to advise that a young girl, not quite sixteen, should "have her own way in everything," was something evidently too absurd to believe; and so, of course, she did not believe it. But as to what he *did* mean she was so completely at a loss, that she at last very wisely determined to think no more about it, persuaded that it could not be very long before he would make himself understood, and determined in the mean while to study his looks and words with more attention than ever, quite certain that he must be right in judgment, however jocose he might choose to be in the expression of it.

Judith meantime had returned to her uncomfortable room, too completely out of sorts to think much about her new acquaintance, though had she been questioned as to her opinion of him, she would have probably declared, in young-lady phrase, that she thought him "a very nice old man."

But her thoughts were, in truth, otherwise engaged. The idea of her mother's favourite sister, the "dear Penelope," she had so often heard her mention, the idea of her being a widowed wanderer with a fatherless son, poor, neglected, and forsaken by her family, had taken such complete possession of the mind of Judith, that she could not, for she would not, think of anything else.

Having put on a few shawls, she seated herself, her feet being skilfully enveloped in a large travelling-mantle, upon one of her trunks which stood at the bottom of her bed, and, folding her soft India wraps closely round her, threw her head back, and fixed her eyes upon the ceiling, determined to think, and think, and think, till she had hit upon some expedient for finding her lost relatives, and to set about putting it in execution at once.

Had she ever happened to see one of those curious advertisements which summon the owner of some given name to disclose themselves, in order to hear of something very greatly to their advantage, it is highly probable that she would have immediately decided upon making the experiment; but she had never heard of the invention, and her own genius did not suggest it.

And vague, indeed, poor child, most painfully vague, were all the methods of giving intelligence which her ignorance suggested.

At one moment she resolved upon writing to her aunt Elfreda, in the hope that she

might have been less harsh and less repulsive towards her unfortunate sister; but she was prevented from doing this, by remembering that, in all Miss Barbara's statements, she had constantly talked of "*we*," and of "*Elfreda and myself*," as making common cause against the unforgiven offender. Had she known the name of a single human being in Rome, she might, very likely, have addressed herself to it, whether male or female, young or old, high or low, in the desperate hope of obtaining the intelligence she so ardently wished to obtain; but she had no such knowledge; and at last she pretty well made up her mind to believe that the only chance left her, was the writing to her kind Madras friend, Mr. Harvey, to inquire if he, or any one else who had known her poor mother, could remember how her letters to Rome had been directed, or recall any name, or circumstance, which might assist her inquiry. But not only the uncertainty of success, but the length of time inevitable upon this scheme for getting intelligence, which she so ardently desired to obtain immediately, chilled her to the very heart; till at length her usually gay and elastic spirit gave way, and the tears began quietly, but steadily, to flow down her cheeks, without her making any effort to check them, and almost without her being conscious that she wept.

It was in this forlorn-looking condition, with her head still thrown back against the bed, her limbs wrapped round in very mummy-like fashion, and the tears flowing down her cheeks, that Susan found her, upon entering to complete some part of her setting-to-rights work in the young lady's room.

If she had found her lying in a "dead swoon," she could not have looked more shocked and terrified; and, clasping her hands, she exclaimed, "Oh! gracious goodness, be merciful to me! What is the matter? My dear, sweet, young lady! Are you ill? Have you heard any terrible news? Has anything dreadful happened to you?"

"No, dear Susan, no! Nothing terrible has happened to me," replied Judith, a good deal ashamed of having been discovered in so deplorable a condition, though perfectly conscious, at the same time, that it was quite impossible for anybody to guess from merely seeing her cry how very, very miserable she was. Yet again she repeated, "No, Susan, no; nothing is the matter with me, only I am so very, very cold."

"Then why do you sit up here for, my

dear child?" said Susan, tenderly unpacking one of her little hands, and finding that it was indeed as cold as ice. "Why don't you come down to the fire? Missis is sure to have a good fire when the Doctor is here, if she don't at any other time, and he is but just gone, Miss. So come down, there's a dear, and bring yourself to life again."

"But, Susan! I can't always be sitting down there! Oh, I do so hate it!"

"Hate what, Miss?" said the pitying but puzzled housemaid.

"I hate all and everything here, except you, Susan," said Judith, sobbing.

"But, my dear child, you must not do that," returned the really worthy Susan. "It would be better a deal if you hated me—though I should not like that very well, either; but it would be a deal better for you to like every thing else, and just only hate poor me, because, after all, what can I do to comfort you? It is your aunt Barbara that must be all in all to you just at present, my dear; so, for goodness gracious sake, don't think about hating her."

"It is very unlucky, Susan, that I cannot follow your advice, for I have a great notion that you will be my only friend here; but I am sorry to tell you that I don't think I shall do anything else," returned Judith, demurely.

"Anything else than what, my dear?" demanded Susan.

"Thinking about hating my aunt Barbara," said Judith.

"Oh, fie, fie! That is very naughty indeed! and I don't, and I won't, believe a word of it. You only say it to frighten me, and make me wonder at you," returned the maid, shaking her head.

"I shall wonder at *you* a great deal more than you will wonder at me, if you will tell me any reason why I should love her," returned Judith, her playful tone changing for one that expressed deep and painful feeling.

"I am not able to talk to you as I would wish to do, my dear, or I am sure I should say a great many convincing things that I can't think of, because of my ignorance; but there is one quite certain fact that we all know, and that is, that we are all forbidden to hate any body," replied Susan, gravely.

"That's all true, and I don't believe that I ever did hate any body, so we will leave hating out of the question; but you have got to tell me, you know, some excellent good reason why I am to love her."

"Oh, my dear child! There are so many. First and foremost, she is your own mother's own sister."

"And so she is. She is my poor aunt Penelope's own sister! And a pretty lesson she has been giving me about family love and affection! Did you ever happen to hear of my uncle Worthington, Susan?"

"Yes, Miss," was the succinct reply.

"Did you ever hear of his doing anything wicked, Susan?"

"Only his being a gentleman as was not rich, Miss," returned the girl, looking rather ashamed of the plea.

"Now, then, I may say fie upon you, Susan! You are not speaking honestly. You don't, in your heart, think that there is any wickedness in not being rich, do you?"

"No, Miss, I do not," said the girl, very cordially, as if relieved by giving the opinion.

"Very well, then, don't let me ever hear you speak in that foolish way again, and I will try, if I can, not to talk any more about hating my aunt Barbara," said Judith.

"There's a darling!" cried the good-hearted Susan, duly appreciating the merit of this good intention; "and now I must see if I can't make you look a little more comfortable." And without waiting to be questioned, as to her intentions, she left the room with a brisk step.

"Please, ma'am, may I make a fire in the young lady's room?" said she, entering Miss Barbara's retreat, and arousing her thereby from the profound meditation into which she had fallen concerning Dr. Wroughtley's real meaning, as to giving her young niece the free use of her will in all things.

The brightest thought that had entered her head upon the subject as yet was, that he was not quite in jest, but yet not quite in earnest. Quite in earnest so very sensible a man could hardly be, in telling the guardian of so mere a child that she was in all things to submit her own judgment to that of her ward. But, nevertheless, Miss Barbara thought it very possible that Dr. Wroughtley was too sincerely her friend not to see and appreciate the great advantage which she herself was likely to derive from the trust reposed in her, and meant, by what he had said, to give her a useful hint, about half in jest and half in earnest, upon the necessity of such a degree of indulgence as might make the young heiress desirous of remaining where she was, instead of going to try her chance with Elfreda.

"Yes, yes! Dear good man! that is what he meant," soliloquized Miss Barbara. "I understand him perfectly, and I shall act accordingly. Of course that is what he meant. It is always right."

"What is it you say, Susan?" cried the startled lady, rousing herself from her reverie. "I don't understand you."

"May I make a fire in Miss Maitland's bedroom?" repeated Susan, very distinctly.

"Did she ask for it?" inquired Miss Barbara, sharply.

"No, ma'am, she did not say one word about it," returned the girl, who, frightened by the well-known accent of reprobation, began to fear that she might be doing more harm than good. "She never asked for fire, or anything else."

"Then why should you come here talking such nonsense?" said her indignant mistress, who, excepting in illness, had never indulged herself in such a luxury, even at Christmas. "I desire you won't put any such nonsense into her thoughts. It would be enough to ruin her constitution entirely, and then I should have to answer for it. Fire, indeed, in a bed-room! Why the leaves are not one-half off the trees yet."

"Very well, ma'am," said Susan, turning back towards the door. But before she could reach it, the anxious spirit of Miss Barbara suggested the possibility that this might be one of the cases in which Dr. Wroughtley would think it more prudent to let the heiress have her own way, and, ere the door was opened, she exclaimed,

"What put it into your head, I wonder? She must have said something, or you never would have thought of anything so absurd. What put it into your head?"

"No, sure, ma'am, I don't remember as she said anything about it. I am certain sure indeed that she never named the word fire, but she was wrapt up with shawls and cloaks from top to toe; and yet her hand was as cold as a stone all the time, for I touched it, and she was crying, ma'am, when I went in, so I didn't think that she looked as if she was comfortable. And that's the reason I came."

"Crying? she was crying? Did you ask her why she was crying?" said Miss Barbara, greatly alarmed. "What was it she said to you? I insist upon it, you tell me every word. And mind this, Susan, if I have even the very slightest reason to believe that you don't tell me truly and exactly everything

she says to you, I will turn you out of the house at a minute's warning. Do you hear?"

"Yes, ma'am," returned Susan.

"And will you remember my commands to let me know everything she says to you?"

"Yes, ma'am," repeated Susan, satisfying her conscience in all ways by remembering that she was as little likely to forget the command as to obey it.

"Now, then, tell me what it was she cried for?" demanded Miss Barbara, sternly.

"Upon my word and honour, ma'am, I can't tell you, unless it was just what I have said already. For when I asked her what was the matter, she answered, 'Nothing! only I am so very cold!'"

"How very extraordinary! And she looking almost like a grown-up woman!" cried Miss Barbara, with equal vexation and contempt.

"Why, then, does she not sit down stairs! Have I not got a fire in two rooms already? Why does she not come down, Susan?"

"And that, ma'am, again, is what I can't tell you," replied the maid, perfectly satisfied that she was speaking the truth; for how was it possible she could tell Miss Barbara that her niece's acknowledged reason for not coming down stairs was, because she hated her? "I'm sure I can't tell you," she repeated. Yet, still, the kind-hearted girl lingered, though quite at a loss how to hit upon any argument that might obtain for her unconscious client the indulgence which was so necessary for her comfort, till, while she stood polishing the top of Miss Barbara's chair, as if waiting for further instructions, it recurred to her, that William had dilated at considerable length in the kitchen, upon the probable reasons why such a very particular lady as "Missis" should like to trouble herself with the charge of a young thing, like "that," and that the cook, thereupon, had looked very wise, and said, "Take my word for it, William, she don't do it for nothing. Don't I know Missis? If I don't, I wonder who does? She never spends sixpence, without thinking six times about it. And she isn't going to do so now, take my word for it."

Susan had listened to this reasoning, at the time it was uttered, with a good deal of indifference, but now it struck her that, if each was right, Missis would not affront the young lady about such a trifle as a bit of fire in the grate, and, therefore, preparatory to her departure, she ventured to say, "Well, I sup-

pose the being cold won't hurt her, for a day or two, and if her nature is so chilly-like, she will most likely be after going to some warmer country, more like that as she came from; so may be it will be best to give her no fire."

"Stay, Susan! stay," cried Miss Barbara, eagerly. "What do you run off for in that sort of pettish way? You are extremely impertinent, I think. Go and light a fire in Miss Maitland's room directly. I may be surprised that she should like a fire in her bedroom, because I do not like it myself, but that is no reason whatever for her not having one; light it directly; and if you can find out any other reason about her crying, let me know it instantly; there is nothing in the world that I wish so much as to make her happy and comfortable. . . . Dear child! let me know everything she says or does."

Susan was perfectly satisfied that she now understood all about it; and, all things considered, she may in some degree be excused if she determined, as this conviction came upon her, to turn it to good account.

CHAPTER XV.

THE first result of this magnanimous resolve was the making a bright fire in poor shivering Judith's bed-room, and the next the still bolder enterprise (because for this she had no warrant) of conveying a well-sized Pembroke table, capable of sustaining a writing-desk, a work-box, and two or three books, at one and the same time, and which was stolen, at all risks, from the landing-place outside the drawing-room door, where, for about half a century, it had been used for the purpose of holding a light, and of sustaining the hats of such gentlemen as did not confide the coverings of their heads to the especial care of the footman, before they mounted the stairs to the drawing-room.

But it certainly was not without a slight tremor that the adventurous house-maid substituted the rickety little thing that had been assigned to Judith in its place. Within an hour after this change had been effected, Miss Barbara perceived it, in passing up stairs to her own apartment, and lost no time in ringing her bell, for the purpose of inquiring why it had been made.

Had the previous interview with her mistress in the study left Susan in any doubt, as to the correctness of the inference she had drawn from what passed there, it would have

been removed effectually by the tone in which Miss Barbara replied to her statement, that she had taken it to Miss Mailland's room, because she wanted it for her writing-desk, by the single monosyllable "Oh!"

Meanwhile the young heiress was really endeavouring, with great good humour, to reconcile herself to her new quarters. The warmth of the fire had done much towards this, and Susan's evident wish to make her comfortable still more. Had it not been for these amended feelings, it is more than probable that the young lady would have declined the offered honour of being permitted to accompany her aunt to the Deanery; but, as it was, she suffered Susan to arrange her beautiful dark hair, which persisted in looking beautiful despite the artificer's want of skill, while she sat close to the fire with her feet on a footstool, (the fender being removed at her earnest entreaty,) and remained there while Susan, on her knees, patiently unpacking employed herself in an enormous trunk, in search of the dress which Judith intended to wear.

There was more than one robe of delicate white muslin, which, as her mother had been dead above six months, Susan declared would be exactly the right thing for her, which was laid aside at her bidding, because there was one quite black, upon which the fancy and the will of the young orphan had fixed in preference.

It was in vain that Susan asked her, if she had observed that her aunt had discarded her mourning altogether; the answer was,—“Yes, I have observed it; but Aunt Barbara was not mamma's child, Susan.”

“That is quite true, Miss; but this black crape is so very deep, Miss Judith,” remonstrated Susan.

“So much the fitter for me, Susan,” was the reply; and the tone was too grave, not to say mournful, to permit any further discussion on the subject.

So the pretty Judith appeared before her aunt in a dress, elegant enough indeed, as to its material, and made in a style that did no discredit to her Asiatic artist, but so absolutely without any species of ornament to relieve its darkness, that the effect of it was positively startling to Miss Barbara, who was herself clothed very gaily, the predominating colours of her ribbons being scarlet and white.

And yet it would have been difficult even for Miss Barbara to make any objection to the

appearance of Judith, as she thus stood before her.

The simple shape of the dress showed her slight and very graceful form to great advantage, and the delicate complexion, which, though very far from *blonde*, was, as Susan truly said, as “white as cream,” could not possibly have been more favourably displayed.

“Well, my dear,” said her aunt at length, after contemplating her for a few minutes in silence, “you do look very nice, to be sure; I cannot deny that. And yet, Judith, considering the time, I think it would be better if you were not in such very deep mourning. I think it would be a great improvement if you had a white flower.”

Judith's only reply was an almost imperceptible shake of the head, which was gently turned away as if to avoid a painful subject. Whether it might be attributed to Dr. Wroughtley's advice, respecting the desirability of letting Miss Maitland have her own way, or to the look of steadfast composure into which her features had settled themselves while she thus, perforce, stood forth to be scrutinized, may be doubtful; but, whatever the cause, the fact is, that Miss Barbara made no farther objection to her appearance, and her next speech was more than usually amiable.

“I am glad I have ordered a carriage,” said she, “for I think you will find it very cold walking.”

But the said carriage was not quite so punctual as it ought to have been, and the consequence of this was, that the handsome drawing-room at the Deanery was already as full as a country drawing-room could reasonably expect to be, when Miss Jenkyns and Miss Maitland were announced. This delay had been very trying to the feelings of Miss Barbara, for she was desperately afraid, knowing the somewhat impetuous temperament of her reverend friend, that Dr. Wroughtley's whist party would be made up before her arrival.

But she perceived, to her great delight, that it was not so. So far from it, indeed, that Doctor Wroughtley, instead of being seated, as was his wont at this advanced hour of the evening, in the most comfortable chair at the most comfortable table, in the most comfortable corner of the room, was still standing on the rug, with his back to the fire, his eyes anxiously fixed upon the door, and every feature in his face denoting expectation.

Miss Jenkyns had studied that face too long to mistake its meaning; she saw in an instant that he was eagerly waiting for her arrival, and she smiled upon him, and upon everybody, as she walked up the room, with ineffable satisfaction.

But neither Doctor Wroughtley, nor anybody else, saw her smiles, for every eye was immediately fixed upon the fair young thing beside her.

It was lucky for Judith, as far as the suffrages of the Westhampton beau monde were concerned, that she not only looked pretty, but that her appearance was a little out of the common way upon this occasion. Had it been otherwise her *début* would have been a failure; for Doctor Wroughtley, the greatest delight in whose life was to be listened to on all subjects as an authority, had dined at the Deanery, and had prepared not only the dinner guests, but all who had arrived afterwards, to expect something rather extraordinary, as well as very admirable, in the rich orphan-niece of their good friend Miss Jenkyns.

Pretty and graceful as she was, therefore it is probable that neither her prettiness, nor her grace, would have availed to avert a feeling of disappointment, had not her dress and aspect had something out of the common way—for the look and the manner, which had struck the Doctor as so very remarkable in the morning, had completely passed away, and she now looked as quiet and subdued as she had seemed to be the contrary during the conversation of the morning.

Nevertheless, no feeling like disappointment was the result. There *was* something extraordinary and out of the common way about her. The elderly gentlemen thought they had never seen anything so youthfully delicate, and yet so very nearly every thing that a beautiful woman ought to be. The elderly ladies perceived at once that she was modest, well-behaved, and lady-like; and even the young ladies of the society were not disposed to be very severe. They declared to each other, however, that they did not think her at all handsome, she was much too pale for that; but there certainly was something elegant-looking about her, and perhaps, when she left off her very deep mourning, and looked a little more like other people, she might improve. But certainly she was not handsome.

The portion of the company who judged her pretensions to being charming with the

greatest severity were decidedly the young men.

They declared that she was totally without animation, and looked either too shy, or too stupid, for anything.

"I see at once," whispered the most sprightly amongst them, "what sort of partner she would be in a waltz. I'll be hanged if I would not almost as soon waltz with her aunt."

This sally was very successful, for it enabled all the young gentlemen who had fine teeth to show them, and attracted a pleasant degree of attention from the young ladies, who remarked to each other that they were sure those creatures were quizzing her, and that wicked monster Frederic Jones setting them on. Upon which the beauty par excellence of the set murmured, with a gentle sigh, "I am sure I pity her! I had rather walk over burning ploughshares, like Queen Emma, than run the gauntlet for the first time before a set of men, with Frederic Jones at their head!"

One young gentleman, however, gave evidence of his perspicuity by remarking that she had "a devilish pretty foot," and, thus encouraged, another ventured to hint that he thought her head was rather well set upon her shoulders. So that, upon the whole, Judith Maitland's first appearance in European society might fairly be considered as successful.

Had any other individual done upon this occasion what Doctor Wroughtley ventured to do, a very vehement degree of indignation would have been excited, and probably expressed by Miss Jenkyns; but he was so every way privileged a person in her estimation, that when he stepped forward and, taking Judith by the hand, led her up to the mistress of the house and presented her to the Dean's lady, instead of permitting Miss Barbara to perform this ceremony, for which she was preparing herself with more than usual animation, she only coloured a little, and still smiled on him benignly, and felt sure that he had some good reason for it.

Mrs. Chilbert, who was in every way a most charming person, received the young stranger very graciously, and, having welcomed the aunt also, she attempted to make her over to Doctor Wroughtley by saying.

"My dear Miss Jenkyns, I shall trust to you and Doctor Wroughtley to make up your own rubber;" and, having said this, she placed Judith on the sofa from which she

had herself just risen, and prepared to sit down by her, with a very flattering air of attention.

But Doc or Wroughtley now rebelled against her authority, as boldly as he had before done against etiquette, for, instead of handing off Miss Barbara in usual gallant style, he only replied,

“Presently, presently.”

And left her standing very conspicuously alone, while he turned the front of his large person towards the sofa, and asked Judith to repeat to Mrs. Chilbert the description she had given him, in the morning, of the pretty little gale, and the sea-monsters it had given to her view, during her voyage.

Judith coloured, and looked embarrassed, as it was very natural she should do, for a group of gentlemen was gradually increasing round the sofa, all looking as if they were exceedingly well inclined to listen to her description of the sea-monsters.

She raised her eyes to the Doctor's face, and the glance very unequivocally expressed displeasure; but she turned from him to Mrs. Chilbert, and almost whispered in her ear, “I am sure you will excuse my telling you any thing about it now.”

The Dean's lady laid her hand, by way of answer, with a gentle pressure on that of Judith, and then, again rising from the sofa, she passed her arm under that of Doctor Wroughtley, and led him off, saying to his agitated adorer, as she passed, “Come, my dear Miss Jenkyns! I cannot let you waste your time in this way. You are so fashionably late this evening! There has been a table waiting for you for hours.”

A little soothed, a little comforted, Miss Barbara followed in the direction in which Mrs. Dean led, and in about three minutes afterwards was almost herself again, for she was seated at the whist-table, and Doctor Wroughtley was her partner.

Whatever shades of difference there might be in the opinions formed and spoken concerning Judith by the company in general, there was not one among them whose admiration was so cordially excited as that of the charming hostess herself. Though the wife of a Dean, and though fifteen years Judith's senior, she was still a young woman, and had still enough of imagination and enthusiasm left about her, to feel herself completely fascinated by the charm of the young stranger's look and manner, set off as it was by the striking contrast of her aunt's dress,

countenance, and demeanour, and by the singular mixture of confiding friendliness with which she addressed her, and the almost haughty glance with which she had repulsed the advances of poor Dr. Wroughtley.

The secret of this sudden liking on both sides was not so much owing to the fact that both ladies, though the younger knew it not, were physiognomists, as to the undoubting faith with which they both applied the science to their practical intercourse with their fellow creatures. With Judith this was done as yet unconsciously, but with Mrs. Chilbert it was the result of several years of speculation, study, and experience.

If Judith had been asked to explain why it was that she felt at the first glance so greatly inclined to love Mrs. Chilbert, she would have replied vaguely, but very truly, “because I could not help it.” And she might probably have added, “I often feel at very the first time of seeing people, that I either like them, or dislike them, without knowing why; and I don't think it ever happens to me that I make any very great mistakes in that way. I generally go on liking or disliking, as I began, only of course it happens sometimes that one gets intimate, and sometimes that one does not—that is all accident; but the feeling about being able to like one person and not another never changes.”

Had the elder and more instructed lady been called upon to explain the causes which led her also so often to like and dislike, almost at a glance, she certainly would have referred the seeming caprice to principles which she considered to be as well-founded, and unchangeable, as the judgment which the eye pronounces on the strength of a well-developed muscle.

But as Mrs. Chilbert was not in the habit of discussing these notions with her acquaintance, the flattering notice which she bestowed upon Miss Barbara's niece was considered as being very complimentary to that lady herself, and the little irritation subsequent upon her first entering the room was fully atoned for, by being repeatedly told in the course of the evening that it must certainly be exceedingly gratifying to her to see the Dean's lady take such particular notice of her niece.

In order to make the value of this compliment fully understood, it must be observed, that the Lord Bishop of Westhampton being a daughterless widower, the Dean's lady was to all intents and purposes the Queen of the

Close, a sovereignty that was disputed by none.

And Mrs. Chilbert, though she never abused her power, knew extremely well how to use it; the result of which was that in her drawing-room people were found oftener in their right places than at most others, unless, indeed, some whim interfered to prevent it.

The Dean's lady loved music, and, for that especial reason, it was very rarely introduced at her evening parties; and again, this seeming contradiction was accounted for by another, for decidedly the reason why Mrs. Chilbert so rarely proposed the opening her piano-forte was, that almost all the young ladies of the society were, more or less, musicians. And poor Mrs. Chilbert's susceptibility on this point was, as she was very painfully aware, exceedingly injurious to that even tenour of strict propriety by which it was her wish, poor lady, to guide herself in all things.

Not only did the Dean's lady suffer much—considerably more, it must be confessed, than she could endure with unflinching patience—when harmony was sinned against in her presence, but she also experienced a degree of pleasure from listening to music when it deserved the name, which she occasionally felt some difficulty in restraining within perfectly discreet and reasonable bounds—and this last offence sometimes brought her into worse scrapes than the first.

Unfortunately for Mrs. Dean the only really good voice and the only really fine musical taste to be found in the whole chapter were combined in the person of a good-for-little minor canon, whose exquisitely melodious manner of chanting had been in truth the sole cause of his appointment, the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop at that period having as sensitive an ear as even Mrs. Chilbert herself.

But this musical Bishop was promoted to another see, and then the Dean's lady was the only inhabitant in the Close who cared a single straw whether minor canons chanted in tune or out of tune.

Still less, if possible, was it a matter of any interest to them that Mr. Saunders, whose nails were dirty, and whose coat was threadbare, had a voice which might have rivalled that of Rubini in his best days, with a finished perfection of manner that he seemed to have caught as a lake catches the reflection of the scenery around it. He had occasionally

heard good singing, and was as incapable (when he was sober) of blundering when attempting the like himself, as water (when calm) of distorting the images it repeats.

Had this dirty, idle, and most unclerical divine been blessed with a nice, notable, pains-taking wife, who would have kept his house and children clean, and given the Dean's lady an excuse for being very kind to her, the difficulties of Mrs. Chilbert would have been greatly lessened, for the hope of being useful to so estimable a person might have justified the endurance of her husband in society; but most unfortunately poor Mrs. Saunders was the very reverse of all this, being as indolent, and almost as dirty, as her spouse, without a shadow of merit of any kind, excepting that species of constitutional good humour which led her to make a jest of all her husband's faults.

This laughing, scrambling, idle pair were the parents of half a dozen children, the four eldest of whom were girls between the ages of fourteen and twenty, and a speculative student of character might have found a good deal of amusement in watching Mrs. Chilbert's persevering hopes that each successive Miss Saunders might justify, by some quality or other, the kindness which it would have been so convenient to her musical taste to bestow upon the family.

But this somewhat selfish benevolence, though eternally in action, was productive of little good, for the young ladies were precisely every thing that the offspring of such parents were likely to be, excepting, indeed, that only one of them had any musical talent at all, and even that was so choked by inveterate indolence, that any thing like perseverance in the cultivation of it was perfectly out of the question.

Yet upon this, such as it was, the Dean's lady was fain to rest her excuse for so perpetually permitting the familiar approach of "those queer Saunderses" to her presence. And greatly did the gossips wonder at it, and, on the whole, it was certainly fortunate, as far as this excellent lady's character for prudence was concerned, that no single individual of the whole reverend society ever guessed at the real state of the case.

Mr. Carey, the apothecary, however, who was a very clever man, had hinted that their good Mrs. Dean was probably looking forward to the time when those unfortunate Saunders' girls would be obliged to do something to help themselves; and perhaps she flattered her-

self, good lady, that Miss Sophia, on account of her fine voice, might some day or other be able to do something in the way of giving singing lessons.

Lessons! If Miss Sophia could have sold her accurate ear, and her harmonious throat, she might have got something for them; but of her teaching what she had never learned, Mrs. Dean, with all her fanaticism, had never entertained so wild a hope. However, the surmise was very useful to her in the Close, though she was not herself aware of it.

It was not very extraordinary, under these circumstances, that Mrs. Chilbert, notwithstanding her really passionate love of music, should rarely or never propose it for the amusement of an evening party, so large and miscellaneous as that which met at the Deanery on the evening of Judith's first visit there.

It is true, that having scrutinized her young face with an experienced and scientific glance, she felt little or no doubt that she should melt with sympathy in this suddenly elected favourite, as well in music as in many other matters; but not for this did she feel at all the more inclined to ask any of the young ladies present to perform for her gratification. She only whispered in her ear the fond inquiry, "Are you fond of music?" To which Judith, after a moment's consideration, oddly answered, "I am not quite sure."

"Not quite sure, my child? What do you mean?"

"I really mean that I am not quite sure," replied Judith very gravely. "For sometimes, though not very often, I have heard a tune or a song that gave me very great pleasure indeed, so as almost to make me ashamed of saying how very much I liked it; but a great, *great* deal oftener, when I have heard people play and sing, I would a great deal rather that they should have let it alone. So I don't suppose I can be very fond of music."

"Do you sing, or play, yourself?" inquired Mrs. Chilbert.

"Oh! I believe you would be frightened if you could hear me! I never had a lesson in singing in my life, and I know no more about it than a cow or an elephant! And sometimes when I have been singing to myself, I have positively been frightened at the noise I made."

"Do you play?" demanded the lady.

"Oh, yes!" replied Judith; "every body

plays, I believe, and I like all the rest. But I don't think I know much about it."

"Do you like dancing?"

"Yes, I am very fond of it," was the frank and cordial reply.

"Then we will see if we cannot manage to have a waltz to-night," returned Mrs. Chilbert, using an eye-glass which her short sight rendered very necessary in order to reconnoitre her guests. "We muster strong in cavaliers this evening, and I think we shall be able to manage it."

It was only now and then that Mrs. Dean indulged her young friends with this sort of impromptu waltzing; she had no child of her own as yet old enough to enjoy it, and though there be many, a dozen years her seniors, who still hope that they have many years of waltzing joys before them, she had given up the pleasant exercise from the time of her marriage, though she greatly excelled in it. But she declared in answer to the solicitations addressed to her on the subject, that she felt as if she should be dancing out of time if she attempted it.

"You dance out of time?" said her sister, who was near her. "Yes, Mary, out of time, out of tune it would be, and out of place too, were the reverend Mrs. Chilbert to dance at all."

Nevertheless, this reverend personage, as she chose to call herself, still liked to see others dance, and if this favourite resource against *ennui* among the young was not oftener resorted to at her frequent parties, it was only because she did not choose that it should be always expected.

But now she led the way into an adjoining room, in which there was a piano-forte and no card-tables, and giving a hint to one or two young men as she passed, that if they would find partners she would play to them, she singled out the identical Mr. Frederic Jones, who had so decidedly expressed his belief that Judith was as unfit for waltzing as her aunt Barbara, and introduced him to her as a partner.

As Judith was fond of dancing, and had a good ear, it is possible that she was held in higher estimation by the dancing gentlemen at the end of the evening than at the beginning of it; but, be this as it may, it was not her dancing which produced the greatest effect upon this her first appearance in an European drawing-room.

After willingly accepting two or three successive volunteer partners, it occurred to Ju-

dith that Mrs. Chilbert, admirably as she played, could not be absolutely insensible to the fatigue of continuing at the instrument so long, and she asked her partner, during a pause in the quadrille, whether some of the other ladies could not assist her.

"I don't know, I am sure," was the reply. "But I suppose not, or else they do not choose to do it, for nobody ever plays for us here but Mrs. Chilbert herself."

This notion of not choosing to assist a person who was doing so much for their enjoyment did not suit Judith's notions of what was right and proper; and at the end of the quadrille she rather abruptly left her partner, and approached the piano-forte.

"Is there nobody here who can play for a little while, that you may rest yourself?" said Judith, with the freedom of an old acquaintance.

Mrs. Chilbert looked up at her, and smiled.

What did that smile mean? It meant that Mrs. Chilbert greatly preferred being fatigued by playing herself, to listening to the performance of any of the ladies to whom Judith had alluded; but as she only shook her head and said nothing, this occult meaning was not even guessed at, and fancying that she only meant to indicate, by this shake of her head, her belief that there was nobody who would choose to play, Judith suddenly took courage, and said, "I wish you would let me try."

"Very well, my dear, I will let you try," replied the Dean's lady, immediately resigning her seat. "I should not have liked to ask you, but I am very glad you have offered."

Confirmed by these words in her belief that Mrs. Chilbert only persevered in playing for them, because no one else would take the trouble of doing it, Judith set about making herself useful, with a degree of zeal and animation which communicated itself with characteristic spirit to her fingers, and she played a Polka as those only can play in whom music is a part of nature.

The air was as gay as the performance of it was brilliant; but yet the first emotion or sensation of the Dean's lady on hearing it brought tears to her eyes. She might certainly have said, like Miranda:

"I am a fool to cry for what I'm glad of,"

for she was glad—very glad to discover that the pretty little creature, whom at a glance

her fancy had endowed with so many good gifts, possessed one which was so peculiarly welcome to her. And that she did possess this gift was very evident. Nobody in the room knew Mrs. Chilbert well enough to comprehend, in the least degree, why it was that she sat down behind her young deputy, but very close to her, and remained there without moving an inch till the dance was over.

It would have been such a good opportunity for her to say a few civil words to the ladies who were sitting out! Still less could any of the dancers comprehend why, or wherefore, it could possibly be, that just at the very time when she had found somebody to help her play she should put a stop to the dancing altogether, by getting up, giving her arm, in the most intimate manner possible, to the young lady in black, that nobody had ever seen before, and then lead her off to the sofa in the card-room, and begin talking to her as if she did not remember that there was anybody else in the room, or that they were all standing still, staring at each other, and not knowing the least in the world what they were to do next, or whether they were to go away, or to stay.

As to Judith herself, she would have been quite as much puzzled as the rest, had she not in her heart believed that Mrs. Chilbert did not think she played well enough to make it desirable for her to go on. And this thought might have vexed her a little, could it have dwelt upon her mind; but that was impossible, for never before had it happened to her to find herself so completely engrossed and amused by conversation as she now was. And as to Mrs. Chilbert, no child with a new toy was ever more delighted. And though she was talking very fast, and uttering a variety of very lively, kind, and amusing speeches, her thoughts were galloping more rapidly still, and, before the party broke up, she had invented about a dozen very clever devices, which would enable her from time to time to get possession of the enchanting little creature, whose features, at the very first glance, she had read so ably.

CHAPTER XVI.

THIS might certainly be reasonably considered as a very favourable début for the half-educated Judith, but it may be doubted whether, on the whole, it did her more good or more harm. Had Mrs. Dean taken no more notice of her than she did of the general run of young ladies who could neither play a

Polka after the manner of the piper at Anster Fair, nor yet display, by every movement of her pretty head, some development that promised material for future friendship, she might have danced herself into the good graces of all the young gentlemen, and, perhaps, chatted herself into favour with some of the young ladies; but, as it was, the judgment passed upon her was, that she gave herself great airs, was exceedingly odd-looking, and not at all agreeable. That the sudden liking of Mrs. Chilbert for her became reciprocal before they parted is quite certain; and the feeling would have been stronger still, for her gratitude would have equalled her admiration, had she been aware of the position which her new friend held in the society of Westhampton.

Any one less ignorant of society and its ways might easily have found this out; for Mrs. Chilbert was both courted and feared by pretty nearly every individual who approached her; and, whenever this is the case, the effect is generally perceptible enough, either for good or for evil, on both sides.

But Judith understood nothing of all this. The point-device respect, and the eager alertness with which all she did, and all she said, was received and listened to, never struck Judith at all, for it seemed to her so very impossible that anybody could help liking Mrs. Chilbert, that it never occurred to her that any other but the most kindly feelings were the cause of either. But poor little Judith was greatly mistaken as to the motive and the value of these manifestations.

It was at rather an early hour on the following morning that Dr. Wroughtley repeated his visit to his friend, Miss Barbara; but, early as it was, Judith had already left her aunt tête-à-tête with her parrot, feeling greatly more inclined to assist Susan in the stowing away some troublesome portions of her superabundant luggage, than to sit at the breakfast-table and hear the spinster and the parrot call one another "darling."

"Has your young lady done breakfast already, Miss Jenkyns?" said he, in an accent that spoke disappointment.

"Darling!" screamed the parrot.

The Doctor laughed immoderately.

"Now is not that curious, Miss Barbara?" he said. "Would not one think that the creature knew who we were talking about? And she is a darling, no doubt about that, my good friend. Did you observe the impression she made at the Deanery?"

"I don't exactly know what you mean about impression, Dr. Wroughtley. Mrs. Chilbert received her very civilly, and so I suppose she would think it proper to do, let me present who I would to her. Mrs. Chilbert gives herself a good many airs, we all know that—nobody who lives in Westhampton, I presume, wants to be told *that*—but she knows better, it is to be hoped, than to be rude to any of our family or connexions."

Dr. Wroughtley perceived that something had gone wrong with his faithful friend and ally, but at that moment he felt less of sympathy than of alarm. He particularly wished just then that *nothing* should go wrong. He had taken it into his head that there ought to be, and that there must be, a series of fêtes and festivals in honour of Judith's arrival, and his early visit was for the express purpose of hinting to his ever obedient friend the absolute necessity of her being first in the field with her invitations for a large evening party.

Miss Barbara Jenkyns was at that moment in a very painfully uncertain state of mind; not indeed as to whether she should receive or reject the advice of the senior Prebend, there could be no doubt in her mind upon such a question as that; but the truth was that she did not know whether to be pleased or displeased.

She had been a little startled, and perhaps a little annoyed, by seeing the young heiress, her niece, snatched away from her at the very moment when she was bridling with importance at the idea of presenting her to the Dean's lady before all the Westhampton world. But a thought so healing mixed itself with her annoyance as almost to turn it into pleasure. It was so friendly, so very intimate on the part of Dr. Wroughtley that it *must* have struck everybody. "Dear kind creature! If it had been his own niece he could not have appeared more anxious about her!"

So that passed off very well.

But there was something in the way in which Mrs. Chilbert had distinguished Judith afterwards that she could not comprehend at all. It was very decidedly flattering, and the more so, certainly, because all the society must have remarked it; but nevertheless she could not help feeling that there was a great mixture of impropriety in it.

That way of walking twice across the room with her arm in arm, for the observant Miss Barbara had seen it all, was quite too much

of a good thing, considering the child's age; and that, as far as Miss Barbara could recollect, Mrs. Chilbert had never been seen to do such a thing before with anybody. And then, what could be so strange as to see the Dean's lady get up and take an ice from the tray, almost the moment it entered the room, and hand it herself to that young thing before any one of the Prebend's ladies had taken any? Then the extraordinary eagerness with which those two sat talking together, while the dancers were all standing still because there was nobody to play to them! All these things were done so completely in defiance of propriety, that till Miss Barbara went to sleep she could think of nothing else, and when she awoke in the morning the same disagreeable feeling respecting all that had happened recurred to her, and made her feel as if she had passed through something strange.

It was, therefore, if possible, with even more pleasure than usual that she recognised the well-known step of her invaluable friend as he approached the parlour door, for she could not doubt that he must have remarked all these strange circumstances as well as herself, and it would indeed be a comfort to hear his opinion about it all. If he thought that Mrs. Chilbert's unaccountable manner of treating Judith was likely to spoil or injure the poor child in any way, she was perfectly prepared to assert and exercise the power confided to her by the Lord Chancellor, and for the next year or two, at least, to plead her youth, and the necessity of taking care of her health, as reasons for refusing to let her go into company, and thus save her from the repetition of such absurdity.

But her very first glance into the face of her valued friend sufficed to convince her that she was not likely to hear from him any observations tending to prove his sympathy with her feelings on this subject, for there was something so gaily triumphant in his manner of declaring the young lady to be a "darling," that it was clearly in vain to hope that he would express anything like disapproval, because the Dean's lady had appeared to be of the same opinion.

So finding that the melancholy mood was not likely to answer, she at once decided upon thinking upon this subject, as well as upon every other, exactly as he thought, and relaxing the frown of her pensive brow, and exerting herself to the very utmost to produce a smile, as she added to her first rather sour

remark the acknowledgment that "Mrs. Chilbert certainly intended to be very civil."

"Civil? my dearest Miss Barbara! Is that all you can say for her?" replied the Doctor indignantly. "Just tell me this, Miss Jenkyns; did you ever happen, during the seven years that she has been here, to see Mrs. Chilbert behave to anybody as she did to your niece last night? Just tell me that, if you please?"

"No, certainly, my dear Doctor, I never did," replied Miss Jenkyns, determined to be pleased, and looking at him most affectionately.

"Very well, then, don't let us quarrel with our bread and butter, my good lady, for if you do, depend upon it I shall take myself off to the Deanery, and say to Mrs. Dean all that I was going to say to you," said Dr. Wroughtley, holding up a threatening finger.

"Oh, don't talk so! I was only frightened for fear of spoiling the dear child; but if you think there is no danger, depend upon it, I shall see none," returned Miss Barbara, meekly.

"That is just as it ought to be; and now I'll tell you exactly how the matter stands. It is a great thing for you, my dear friend, to have such an assistance to your income as this child will bring you. You were saying something about a carriage the other day, and my opinion is that she decidedly ought to have a carriage, and she must pay for it too, of course; but it won't be a bit the less your carriage for that. We shall soon know what the allowance is to be, and, if we don't think it sufficient, I will put you in the proper way to memorialize."

Miss Barbara's heart beat, as she perhaps had never felt it beat before.

Surely her ears did not deceive her? She really had heard him say "we."

"Had he not said it twice?"

"What did it mean? What could it mean? She was not of an age, neither was she of so silly a character, as to judge the less kindly of a man for thinking that a woman might be worth marrying under some circumstances, whomight not be worth marrying under others. A carriage was a comfort, and a comfort that, if they were to marry now, they could well afford. There must be some reason for his looking so very gay, so very happy. What reason could there be but one?"

At an early period of this narrative I assured my readers that Miss Barbara Jenkyns

was not in love with Dr. Wroughtley, and the state of her mind at that period was, to the best of my knowledge and belief, exactly what I described it to be. She was not in love with him. Never did the words of a poet more fitly become a proverb than in the case of that well-known line,

“None without hope e’er loved the brightest fair.”

And, at the time to which I refer, Miss Barbara Jenkyns had no hope, ergo, she was not in love.

But now her case was widely different. It clearly appeared to her that Dr. Wroughtley was an altered man, and the consequence of this was that she became an altered woman also.

For a moment her feelings almost terrified her; the lively consciousness of a change in their relative situation impressed itself upon her soul in a manner that for an instant almost overpowered its functions. But happily she possessed sufficient strength of mind to prevent her betraying any feeling she might wish to hide. The most smiling and amiable complaisance, and the most yielding compliance with his judgment in all ways, were not among these, and the lively old gentleman had, therefore, every reason to be well satisfied by the effect of his eloquence upon her, yet still without his becoming in the least degree conscious of the new-born hopes of his old acquaintance.

On the contrary, he only thought that there was something particularly business-like and reasonable in the manner in which she nodded her approval, and said, “If you will undertake to manage the Lord Chancellor for me, I shall have no further doubt about the matter.”

“That’s all right, then, Miss Barbara, and we shall be able to drive her about a little, you know, and make her clerical quarters quite gay enough to content her. And as to spoiling her, for goodness sake don’t get any of that sort of nonsense into your head. You may take my word for it, my dear friend, that pretty young ladies with two thousand a-year must be spoiled, and will be spoiled, all the world knows that. All you have to do is to make her happy and comfortable, and, of course, to take good care that she does not throw herself and her thousands away upon the first gay spark that presumes to make love to her. That’s the danger we must guard against.”

“Make love to her! Mercy on us, my dear

Doctor, don’t talk of such a thing! And she but just sixteen! Can one fancy anything so shocking! But what did you mean about saying something to Mrs. Dean that I would not hear? You need not do that, Dr. Wroughtley. What was it? I am ready to hear anything!”

Luckily for Miss Barbara Jenkyns, Dr. Wroughtley was one of the least suspicious men alive. Had it been otherwise, he could scarcely have failed to perceive the more than usual softness, both of voice and manner, with which these words were spoken. But, as it was, he saw nothing of the kind, and answered her jovially, “Why the putting her up to something gay and frolicsome, to be sure, if I could not put you up to it yourself.”

“Frolicsome! he! he! he! I am sure you may put me up to anything, Dr. Wroughtley.”

“Come! I shall see that presently. What shall you say to me, Miss Barbara, when I tell you that, in my opinion, you ought to give a ball?”

“A ball? Oh! Dr. Wroughtley! You think I should give a ball!”

It would take more words than the information would be worth were I to rehearse all the thoughts that this proposal gave birth to in the brain of Miss Barbara. Suffice it to say that she felt in the very centre of her soul that it meant something.

It was so new, so perfectly unlike anything he had ever proposed to her before, that a sort of natural logic forced upon her the conviction that it must mean something that he had never meant before! She felt, too, that her own situation *was* critical! In her inmost heart she believed that the man who now sat in comely clerical dignity before her eyes, and on whom she had never yet dared to look as a possible husband, was in the very act of making up his mind whether he should become a married man or no! Had he said anything so wildly new under any other circumstances which had ever occurred to them? NEVER! The inference, therefore, was clear, and presented itself to her in a moment. Something new had got into his head which it was impossible for her to doubt would, in process of time, be explained more clearly.

Meanwhile it was already clear, beyond the possibility of doubt, that she owed it both to herself and to him, not to say or do anything that might in any way offend or check

him. **CHECK HIM!!!** Was there any woman alive who could be capable of such madness? At any rate, she thanked Heaven that she was not such a one; and thereupon she smiled, as, perhaps, only elderly ladies under such circumstances can smile, and replied, after the impassioned sounds, "Oh, Dr. Wroughtley!" had again passed her lips, by saying, "I will send out invitations for a ball to-morrow, if you like it."

"Well said, my dear Miss Barbara! I shall make something of you, at last, I see that," he exclaimed, rising; and then added, preparatory to leaving the room, "As soon as I saw Miss Judith, I perceived that I must set to work to put you in the right way of managing so lively a genius, unless I meant that she should slip through your fingers, which would not suit my politics at all, I assure you; for she, and her fine fortune together, is exactly the sort of thing that was wanted to stir us up a little."

Miss Barbara shook from head to foot.

"Now, then, I shall leave you to write your invitations; I have a monstrous mind to make you fix the day, at once."

"Fix the day?" gasped Miss Barbara.

"Well, well! my dear good soul, do not look so terrified. I must not frighten you out of your wits, by talking about *at once*, or your doors will be shut against me, I suppose."

"Oh! don't, don't talk so, Dr. Wroughtley!" murmured the greatly agitated lady.

The worthy Doctor looked at her with astonishment and alarm. She really had turned quite pale, and he began to think that his novel proposal had frightened her very seriously. Instead of leaving the room, therefore, as he was preparing to do, he came back to the chair he had occupied, and, drawing it close to hers, he took her hand very kindly in his.

There was a vast deal of genuine good-nature in Dr. Wroughtley, and though he had perhaps, the rather common fault, of loving himself best, he joined to it the redeeming quality of loving others too. For instance, he loved Miss Barbara Jenkyns very sincerely; not exactly, perhaps, in the way and manner that she would have best liked, poor lady, but as a good-natured person is pretty sure to love those who have been kind to them.

Now Miss Barbara Jenkyns had always been very kind to Dr. Wroughtley, and he, accordingly, really loved her; and there he sat close to her, holding her hand in his, and

looking very kindly in her face, she, the whole time, believing firmly that he was her lover. It is a very common saying amongst us poor weak human beings, that we never know what we can bear till we have been tried.

Had any fortune-telling gipsy told Miss Barbara Jenkyns that she could have thus sat, without falling from her chair in a fainting fit, she would have called her an impostor.

Nevertheless, Miss Barbara did not either fall or faint; but, on the contrary, schooled herself very severely, for giving way so to her feelings. She was conscious that it was enough to make so superior-minded a man as Dr. Wroughtley tremble at the idea of having so nervous a wife, and rousing herself from the effect of the tender emotion which had so nearly overpowered her, she determined to hear, and answer, in a proper lady-like manner, all that he might choose to say to her, let it be what it might.

"Come, now! That's right!" said he, looking laughingly in her face; "your colour is coming back again, Miss Barbara. I will bet a guinea that you were frightened out of your seven senses because you did not know how to get beaux enough. Come! Tell the truth; is not that the fact?"

"Well! perhaps it is, Dr. Wroughtley," she replied, turning her head away from him, and perfectly convinced in her heart that he saw, understood, and pitied the inevitable embarrassment of her feelings under such circumstances as those in which he had placed her; and sorely did she blame herself for having betrayed a degree of weakness that called for a forbearance on his part which might for weeks, perhaps, retard that full declaration of his sentiments which she had given him such good reason to believe she had not strength of nerve to bear.

Had she not, even at that very moment, been soothed by the thought that he must perforce love her the better for feelings so truly delicate and feminine, she would not have been able to endure this cruel delay so heroically as she did; but, as it was, she really behaved most admirably.

"Think no more of my folly, Doctor," said she, recovering herself by an effort that did her infinite honour, and, at the same time, bestowing a smile on him, kind enough to have consoled the disappointment of any reasonable man; "let us talk of nothing now but the ball. I must confess, however, that

I don't think I ever should have had courage to set about it without your help, but now, I really don't think I should be afraid of any thing."

"Capital!" cried the doctor, quite elated by his success; "that is exactly the point that I wanted to bring you to, my dear friend. I tell you that it is a great object for you, a very great object, to have this rich young niece living with you. There is no need for her to be married for half a dozen years yet, and I should not at all wonder if you were to get six or seven hundred a-year with her. It is really worth having. But I can tell you, in your ear, my dear," (and here, by the unfortunate necessity of blowing his nose, he stopped short, with what effect upon the feeling of Miss Barbara may be more easily imagined than described,) "I can tell you, in your ear, my dear Miss Barbara, that the very first moment I set my eyes upon the young lady, I became perfectly well acquainted with her character. One does not see such eyes as hers very often, Miss Barbara; but, nevertheless, it is easy enough to read what they say, at least, I confess I found it so."

"What *can* you mean, my dearest friend?" cried Miss Barbara, almost wildly, for a whole host of conflicting suspicions rushed upon her at once. But the monster thought which swallowed up all the rest was, that Judith had perceived their attachment, and meant to oppose it.

"Nay, don't frighten yourself again, Miss Barbara, don't frighten yourself. You look exactly as if I had told you that the young lady was going to set fire to your house," said Dr. Wroughtley, looking in her agitated face, and laughing heartily; "my discoveries fall far short of that. What I mean is this, Miss Barbara; I mean, that I think your pretty Miss Judith is a young lady who will like to have her own way; and as the own way of all the pretty girls I ever heard of is very decidedly in favour of balls and amusements of all sorts, I am of opinion that the best thing you can do, in order to keep her here, will be to give a ball, not only for the sake of that ball itself, but of all the other balls which will be sure to follow after."

Miss Barbara became calmer, much calmer, upon hearing these words, yet something like the coldness of disappointment followed. She had thought that the great, the important words were so very near! But

now, it was evident, that she had still to wait for them.

Well! they were worth waiting for, and she would, in the mean time, do so exactly every thing he told her to do, as should effectually prevent his having any doubts about her future obedience as a wife. There was something very sweetly soothing in this!

"I have no doubt you are right!" she replied, fixing her eyes full upon his face, as worshippers always do fix their eyes upon the idols, whether saints or virgins, to whom they are vowing obedience. "All I ask is, that you should tell me what I am to do, and you may be very sure I'll do it, Dr. Wroughtley!"

"That's right," he replied. "Now, then, just sit down and invite all your acquaintance for—for to-morrow fortnight, let us say, and write the word "*dancing*" on the corner of your note. Do you understand? That will settle the thing at once. It will be a real ball, you see, and no mistake, and all the party-giving people must do the same thing. And about the dancing gentlemen, if you don't know them all, I can help you there. The great object, remember, is to prevent our little heiress from turning her hopes and her wishes towards her London aunt, because the country one is not gay enough for her. Do you see? Do you understand my motive and object?"

Miss Barbara smiled expressively, nodded her head, received a parting shake of the hand from her friend in return, and was in the next moment alone, absolutely alone with her own thoughts. Alone? Could she indeed be said to be alone? Where were the beings to be found (Dr. Wroughtley not being amongst them) who could have produced effects equally overpowering to those occasioned by the crowd of new ideas which now assailed her? And as if he had not said enough before, that last little parting pronoun *our*, prefixed to the mention of her niece, was left ringing in her ears!

To doubt his being in earnest was impossible. To doubt his honour, by imagining it possible he could change the purpose he had so clearly indicated, was equally so. Nevertheless, she told herself, with the wisdom of ripened years and characteristic prudence, that Dr. Wroughtley was not a man to make an imprudent match. He had sufficiently proved this by having waited for so many years without declaring his wishes; and therefore, that the result of all her hopes so

late, so newly born, depended wholly upon herself, and upon her conducting herself in such a manner towards Judith as might teach her to believe that Westhampton was a perfect paradise, and herself the gentlest of guardian angels.

CHAPTER XVII.

DR. WROUGHTLEY was by no means a stupid man, but had he been, what he certainly was not, the most acute observer of human character, and of all the complex impulses by which it is acted upon, he could not have conducted matters in a more skilful manner for attaining the object he had in view than he had done. That he had attained something more, and that this something was what he was as far from wishing as from expecting, could not fairly be charged against him as a defect in his operations, for it was the peculiar state of Miss Barbara Jenkyns' feelings which produced it, and that with a sort of spontaneous vehemence of combustion which, as he could not have foreseen, so neither could he take any measures to prevent.

The good-natured Prebend's good-natured object had been to make the young Judith's home in the house of her very dull old aunt as gay and as happy as circumstances would permit. He had been delighted both with the beauty and the intelligence of Judith, and the accident of her appearing before him at a moment when her feelings had been strongly excited by what had passed respecting her aunt Worthington, had led to his forming rather an exaggerated estimate of the vivacity of her temper. But, excepting on this point, he really had not blundered at all.

He knew that a pretty girl, with a large fortune, was not likely to find much satisfaction in such a manner of life as that of Miss Barbara; he knew, also, that the stipend which would be paid for her board would be a very convenient addition to his old friend's income; and though he was not the sort of man to take any advantage of an absent adversary, as in a little quiet social way Miss Elfreda had ever acknowledged herself to be (chiefly on account of his marked indifference to every science save whist), yet still he did not like the idea of her running away with the pretty heiress, merely because poor dear Miss Barbara did not know how to set about giving a party.

It was with the same object, too, that he chose to volunteer his assistance in presenting the young lady to Mrs. Chilbert. For

some reason or other, for which she might herself perhaps have been greatly at a loss to account, she seemed upon more easy and intimate terms with Dr. Wroughtley than with any other of the Prebends. Perhaps it was because he happened to have a pleasant tone of voice in speaking, for she was just the sort of person to be influenced by such an accident; or it might be because he often saved her a great deal of trouble at her parties by undertaking the arrangement of her whist-tables. Whatever the cause, such, however, was the fact, and Dr. Wroughtley knew it, and, therefore, thought, reasonably enough, that by bringing forward the young stranger as his especial protégée, he should be doing her a service at the Deanery.

And it might have done her service, had any such service been wanted; but Mrs. Dean had an eye for a picture, as well as an ear for a tone, and there was something in the contour of Judith's slight form, in the classic shape of her small head, and the striking effect of colour produced by the contrast of her dress and complexion, which immediately superseded the necessity of any introduction at all. In going into a picture-gallery Mrs. Chilbert did not turn to her catalogue, but was sure to take up her station before the best picture within the reach of her glass. This was not from any critical knowledge of the art, for, practically speaking, she had none, but it was a species of instinct which never led her wrong.

It was, however, very fortunate for Mrs. Chilbert that her marriage with the Dean of Westhampton had placed her in a position which called so decidedly for a somewhat dignified demeanour as to make her feel, without reasoning upon the matter, that there would be something wrong, something that she would have called want of keeping, and want of harmony, had she not adopted it. Without some such restraint it is very possible she might have done many more imprudent things than she actually did, and many things still more imprudent than any which as yet she had really achieved. Nevertheless, she might still be, and certainly was, occasionally accused of doing "odd things," though nothing assuredly that her own conscience could have accused her of believing to be wrong.

The fancy she had taken for Judith was by no means momentary, for she not only remembered it the next morning, but it determined her to make a morning call upon Miss

Jenkyns, which, to say truth, was an event of very rare occurrence. Fortunately for Miss Barbara, the hour chosen for this rare and highly valued compliment was not an early one, or it might have found her still too vehemently affected by her interview with Dr. Wroughtley to have received it properly.

By a lucky chance, however, Mr. Saunders, the harmonious minor canon, and his rich-voiced daughter Sophia, happened to call at the Deanery just as Mrs. Chilbert was in the very act of walking down the steps to her carriage; and no sooner did she perceive them, than her purpose changed, and, ordering the carriage to wait, she re-entered the house.

Holding in her delicately-gloved fingers the dirty-beavered hand of Miss Sophia, she led her up the stairs, and still held her fast, till she had deposited her in a chair close to the piano-forte.

It was in vain that Mr. Saunders civilly expressed his fears that they had prevented her from taking a drive; she assured him, and very truly, that she had rather hear him and his daughter Sophy sing, either or both, some of her favourite airs, than take all the drives in the world.

It may seem improbable, perhaps, that a lady in Mrs. Dean's position should find any difficulty in obtaining the musical assistance of Mr. Saunders and his daughter whenever she wished for it; such, however, was the fact, for the indolence of both father and daughter was such, that it was far from being often that they could both agree to take the trouble of making themselves a little more presentable than ordinary, in order to appear at the Deanery.

Rarely, or never indeed, did they make this effort, that they did not, both of them, enjoy their visit, and invariably say to each other, as they walked home, that they certainly would keep their promise this time, and go there again very soon.

But the promise was as invariably broken; for if one was ready and willing, the other was not; and as filial obedience made no part of their domestic code, the young lady, who, of the two, enjoyed these musical mornings the least, was of course the one who impeded them the most.

Had it been for musical evenings instead of musical mornings, the case might have been different, for then Miss Sophia, as well as her mamma and her sisters, would have had to

make themselves fine instead of tidy, a very different sort of business, and which had in it sufficient attraction to counteract all the *vis inertiae* of their indolence.

But this did not suit Mrs. Dean.

The having to entertain Mrs. and the four Miss Saunderses, not to mention the having to wait for her reward till their papa had swallowed about four cups of tea, and as much cake as came within his reach, was more than she could endure, and, therefore, all she could do was to endeavour to make them understand, that if the favoured *two* did not choose to come to her now and then of a morning, she should not choose to invite the entire *six* in an evening; and it was, in fact, for the purpose of impressing this important truth upon their minds that she had omitted them in her invitations for the preceding evening.

The hint, as it seemed, had been understood, for the first words spoken by Mr. Saunders, on now reaching the drawing-room, were to apologize for their having been so long without calling on her.

"Long, indeed!" replied Mrs. Chilbert, at once opening the piano-forte, and sitting down before it; "and now you must make up for it by singing 'Angels bright and fair,' for me, Miss Sophy; and your papa shall pay his fine by——"

But here she suddenly stopped. A new idea had entered her head, which she hastened to make profitable in the following manner.

"By the way, Mr. Saunders," said she, "it seems to me that we are very stupid people never to have arranged a better mode of indulging our musical fancies than by my dragging you both out in the morning, when perhaps you might be better occupied at home. Why should we not have our little singing coterie in an evening?"

The somewhat heavy countenance of Miss Sophy brightened up immediately.

"Oh dear! yes," she exclaimed. "We should all of us like that so much!"

"Stop, stop, my dear! That is not what I mean," returned Mrs. Chilbert, running her fingers over the keys. "I know all young ladies like parties, and if I oblige them by occasionally giving them an opportunity of dancing, as they did here till near one o'clock this morning, I think it is but fair that they should oblige me by singing to me when I ask them to do it."

"Oh dear, certainly!" again exclaimed the now almost animated Sophia. "I am sure I

and papa should always be ready to sing before the dancing began. Should we not, papa?"

"Before or after, either or both, my dear lady," said Mr. Saunders, who loved a ball, and a ball-supper, exceedingly.

"Thank you; but that is not what I want," said Mrs. Chilbert very distinctly. "But if you will listen to me patiently for a minute or two, I will explain myself. When all your family come here with you, Mr. Saunders, it is quite impossible, you know, for me to sit down as I like to do when we are by ourselves, and accompany you through as many songs as you will be good enough to sing for me. It would be so very rude to Mrs. Saunders, and your other daughters."

"Oh! I assure you, for that matter, they would not mind it at all, but quite the contrary, if they were to dance afterwards," said Miss Sophia.

Mrs. Chilbert looked at her; but if she meditated a rebuff she changed her mind, and quietly said,

"But every one else in the room would think it extremely rude were I to take no notice of them as they came in, because I was amusing myself. No, my dear young lady, that won't do. When I want you to sing for me, I must have you and your papa by yourselves; and if you will agree to come in that way, Mr. Saunders, only bringing Miss Sophy with you, I will promise to make you as comfortable as I can; and you may tell your sisters, my dear, that if they and your mamma will spare you to me about once a-week in that manner, I will promise in return not to have a single dance during the whole winter without inviting you all to it."

The great glee which was expressed at this proposal by both father and daughter caused Mrs. Chilbert to reproach herself with considerable severity for not having had the common sense to make it before.

"What on earth was I afraid of?" thought she. "But I owe the inspiration now to that enchanting little creature who will enjoy the fruit of it with me."

This important arrangement made, song after song followed, till the delighted *fanatica* was recalled to a consciousness of the disagreeable fact that Time will not pause for a moment, even to listen to good singing, by hearing the great cathedral clock strike three.

The piano-forte was closed in a moment. Mrs. Chilbert had some dim recollection of

having heard that good Miss Jenkyns dined very early, and a sudden dread came upon her that she might find her at table, and be thus prevented at last from achieving the great object which she had in view since she first opened her eyes in the morning.

Her guests were now dismissed a little in the Lady Macbeth style of "Go at once," yet not without so clear yet brief a recapitulation of their newly-arranged compact, as produced a cordial assent from both father and daughter.

"By the way," said Mrs. Chilbert, as she followed them down stairs, "Why should we not begin to-morrow?"

"Will you give another dance to-morrow?" ejaculated Miss Sophia, suddenly standing still, with her right foot on one stair and her left on another. "To-morrow?" she repeated. "How very delightful!"

"You would not find it delightful at all, Miss Sophy," replied the clever Mrs. Dean, "for I should not be able to get three dancing men together at such short notice. They will have made up their shooting parties, you know, and all that sort of thing. This is such a sporting neighbourhood, that it is absolutely necessary to give notice a week beforehand, if you want to secure half a dozen dancing men. We all know that."

"Oh! then, don't let it be to-morrow!" returned Miss Sophia, with great *naiveté*.

"No, my dear, it shall be to-morrow week; and remember, I invite you *all*. And you and your papa must come to me exactly at eight o'clock to-morrow evening. Is it a bargain?"

The engagement was eagerly ratified, and at length the Dean's lady found herself at Miss Jenkyns' door.

Miss Barbara's dinner hour was half past three, and it was easy to perceive on the expressive countenance of her man William, the moment it appeared at the door, that he was by no means certain whether he ought to say "no" or "yes," in reply to the footman's question, "Is Miss Jenkyns at home?"

Before either could be spoken, Mrs. Chilbert was herself endeavouring to open the carriage door.

"But one moment. I will not detain her more," cried the eager visitor, scarcely permitting the steps of the carriage to be let down; and before the startled William had articulated "yes," or "no," Mrs. Dean was in the hall.

But though this activity on her part had

settled the question of to enter or not to enter, it had by no means relieved William from his perplexity; for the Dean's lady was a great personage in Westhampton, as Deans' ladies always are where there are no Bishops' ladies resident, and this faithful servant of the Jenkyns family could not endure the idea of ushering her into Miss Barbara's little back parlour. Yet what could he do? In the drawing-room there was no fire, and in the dining room there was the table-cloth!

Mrs. Chilbert, however, again settled the question for him. She had never been in any other rooms but the dining and drawing-rooms, and, being in much too great a hurry to waste time in meditating on the possibility of there being any other, she ran up the stairs, and entering the large cold state-room at the top, found it, greatly to her disappointment, untenanted.

"Where are the ladies?" she said, turning round and meeting the perplexed eyes of poor William, who with all his efforts had not been able to reach the landing-place in time to open the drawing-room door for her.

"I only want to see them for a moment. If Miss Maitland is disengaged, let me see her."

"If you will please to be seated, madam, I will bring her this minute," returned William, rushing out of the room, but pausing when he had closed the door behind him, uncertain whether he ought to summon the old lady or the young one.

But Miss Barbara herself had heard the authoritative ring of the Deanery footman; and, putting her nose out of her retreat, not only perceived the well-known colours of this functionary, but perceived also the richly-laced cloak of his elegant mistress walking up the stairs towards the drawing-room with no fire in it. "Oh! William! William!" murmured the vexed lady as she passed her blameless servant on the stairs.

"Am I to fetch the young Miss?" cried William, actually extending his audacious hand to prevent her escaping him till he had received her orders on this important point. "The lady has asked for her."

"No!" returned Miss Barbara, in her eager wish to shorten Mrs. Dean's stay in the cold drawing-room.

But ere the man had fairly passed her, she remembered that her visitor was the gayest lady in Westhampton, and that it might be of the most vital importance to her own tenderest interests that Judith should become

well known to her, in order that she might profit by her invitations, which were universally acknowledged to be the most sought for in the town.

"Yes, William! yes!" she now said, almost close to his ear, with startling eagerness. "Go up to her room, William, and tell her that she must come down to the drawing-room this moment, that is if she has no objection. Be sure to say if she has no objection."

This was said with her hand on the lock of the drawing-room door, and in the next moment she stood before her graceful visitor, pouring forth apologies for the coldness of the room, and complaints of her extraordinary ill-luck in having been so busily occupied in the study all the morning in writing letters, that she had never thought of ordering the drawing-room fire to be lighted.

"I am not in the least degree cold, I thank you," said Mrs. Chilbert; "but where is your charming niece? I would not let the day pass without paying my compliments to her. How lucky you are, Miss Jenkyns, in having so amiable a ward sent you."

"I am!—indeed I feel it, Mrs. Chilbert. I am most wonderfully lucky, if I can but make the place agreeable to her, Mrs. Chilbert! But young girls, you know, do sometimes expect so much in the way of gaiety, that I'm sure there is no saying whether she will like Westhampton or not."

"Oh, she will be sure to like it, Miss Jenkyns, if we are all kind to her," replied the Dean's lady. "And I declare to you," she added, with great cordiality, "that if you will give me leave to help you, Miss Jenkyns, in trying to make her like it, I will do all I can to render the place and the people agreeable to her."

Miss Jenkyns felt as if she would have liked to kneel down and kiss her feet.

"Nobody in the whole world, Mrs. Dean, not the Queen's Majesty upon the throne, could have more perfect power in that way than you have, and I have no words to say the gratitude I shall feel for every bit of civility you will be pleased to show her."

This eager reception of her offered kindness to the young heiress was as unexpected as it was agreeable; for Miss Barbara Jenkyns, though acknowledged by everybody to be one of the most respectable ex-Close inhabitants of Westhampton, was nevertheless considered to have that peculiarity of temper which is generally expressed by the word *touchy*, and

Mrs. Chilbert was not without some fear (reasonable enough under the circumstances) that Miss Barbara might feel herself a little affronted if any very marked eagerness were manifested by her for the society of her niece, inasmuch as no such eagerness had ever been expressed for her own.

But this fear vanished completely before the words and the accent of Miss Barbara, the sincerity of which it was quite impossible to doubt, and there was something absolutely joyous in the manner of Mrs. Chilbert as she replied, "Well then, my dear Miss Jenkyns, we shall all be made happy by her arrival. She plays so very nicely on the piano that it will be quite a pleasure for me to have her, not only when we have company, but when I am alone, for we can play together, and I rather think, from something she said last night about her wanting practice, that she will enjoy this quite as much as I shall. And this, you know, may prevent your ever feeling her in the way when you wish to have one of your little snug rubbers at home; it is always awkward to have one person left out, is it not?"

Might not any one have thought that Mrs. Dean knew every secret of Miss Jenkyns' heart, and was speaking accordingly?

But Miss Barbara neither thought nor suspected any such thing; she only felt at the very bottom of her heart that it was *providential*, and she was still in the act of expressing her approval and her thankfulness when Judith entered.

If Miss Barbara herself had not been a great deal too happy and too agitated to think much of anything else, she might have been a little puzzled and surprised at the greeting between the two ladies who were so very nearly strangers to each other. Judith entered almost with a bound, whereupon Mrs. Dean made very nearly as eager a movement to meet her. And when they met, they seized, evidently by mutual consent, each on both hands of the other, and in the next moment, stranger still, they embraced, actually kissed each other, though less than twenty-four hours ago neither of them had ever beheld the other!

Yet still Miss Barbara only looked delighted; but her secret thoughts, notwithstanding her pious propensities in favour of Providence, suggested the idea that Dr. Wroughtley *must* have had something to do with it. He certainly *must* have said or done something to put it into Mrs. Dean's head that it

would be a good thing for the society of the Close if Judith could at once be made to think it very delightful.

But Mrs. Chilbert, notwithstanding her great satisfaction at seeing that the complexion of her newly-elected favourite was more exquisitely delicate by day than by candle-light, and the satisfaction, greater still, of perceiving that the pleasure of this second meeting was mutual, was too really well-bred to forget that the mistress of the house was probably wishing her out of it; she therefore lost not a moment in saying, as if in conclusion of what had passed before Judith entered, "May I hope then, that, if Miss Maitland kindly agrees to it, you will have no objection to her passing a very quiet evening with me to-morrow?"

"Objection! Oh, dear! what a word! Instead of that, I shall be delighted!" replied Miss Barbara, bowing and curtsying most graciously.

"Then I will send the carriage for you, at eight, my dear," said the confiding lady, without thinking it necessary to wait for any consent from Judith herself, beyond what her eyes had already given. Judith only smiled and nodded, for she too seemed to think that words were quite unnecessary.

And then Mrs. Dean departed, leaving the young lady greatly pleased, but the elder one in a state of exalted happiness, which could by no means be justly described by any such temperate phrase.

No sooner was the hall door shut, with its sonorous slam, upon the Dean's lady, than Miss Barbara, in a frisky sort of manner, took her niece by the arm, and led her down stairs into the study. They passed William in the hall, who, still dreading a reprimand for having admitted company, and such company too, at such a moment, was passing with a rapid step towards the kitchen in order to get out of the way; but the sunshine of Miss Barbara's heart, at that moment, was like that of heaven; it fell on the guilty as well as the innocent, and William unexpectedly felt himself basking therein when he heard himself ordered, in a tone of unmistakeable contentment, to "bring up dinner directly."

"But let him be as quick as he will," she added, turning to Judith, "there will be still time enough for you to go into my study for one moment. I want you to see, my dear, how I have been passing my morning, and then you will perceive, I think, that the very

first object I have in the world is to please you, and make you happy."

It instantly occurred to Judith, that her aunt (the aunt, to whom she had been so unjustly taking an aversion) had been passing the interval since they parted in endeavouring to discover some clue to the present residence, or at least to the present address, of her aunt Worthington. To obtain this was so much beyond all things else the first wish of her heart, that it seemed impossible that any one who knew as much about it all as aunt Barbara did could talk of making her happy in any other manner.

On entering the study, and seeing the table covered with what looked like notes, or letters, this idea was confirmed, and she had all but thrown herself into the arms of her aunt to thank her for her exceeding kindness, when she was stopped by hearing her say, "Look there, my dear Judith! There are no less than twenty-three notes of invitation, written already, for a ball I am going to give to-morrow fortnight, in honour of your arrival."

Judith will be accounted a very childish girl of sixteen if I confess that, heroine as she was, she was very near bursting into tears at this disappointment. However, it was only very near; the tears did not come. But the preventing this disgrace to her womanhood was quite as much as she could achieve in the way of good behaviour on that occasion; the pretending to be pleased, or making any acknowledgment in the way of thanks, was quite beyond her power. Miss Barbara tried to look at her face, but that was impossible, for Judith was blowing her nose, though, thanks to a great effort, it was not necessary for her to wipe her eyes. But this silence was too mysterious, too cruel, too ungrateful to be borne, and, after meditating upon it for a minute or so, Miss Barbara said, in a piteous tone,—“Are you not pleased, my dear? Don't you like balls? I hope to heaven you are not a Methodist! are you?”

“No, aunt, no; I am not,” said Judith, appearing to think this a good opportunity for letting her tears flow. “I am not a Methodist. But I am very unhappy!”

“Unhappy because I am going to give a ball in honour of your arrival? What can you mean, Judith?”

“Nothing about the ball. I don't mean anything about the ball, aunt. I like balls very much, I believe. But I shall never be

really happy till you find out for me where my aunt Worthington and my cousin Charles are. The last command my dear mamma gave was, that I should love them, and be kind to them. And how can I, if I am never to be told where they are?”

“Your aunt Worthington, and your cousin Charles?” repeated Miss Barbara, almost wildly.

“Yes, aunt Barbara, my aunt Worthington and my cousin Charles; and I must and will find out where they are. And, if there is no other way of doing it, I will go to Rome myself. Mamma often talked of going to Rome to see them. And if she could do it, why may not I?”

CHAPTER XVIII.

I AM sadly afraid that even amongst the best of us there is a great deal of naughty feeling. Even in cases where none of those powerful passions are concerned which, while they make an essential part of the mystical sublimity of man, give him, as Goody Grout says of her grand-children, more trouble than all his money, even in cases where these meddling agents have nothing to do with the matter, we are very often very far from being amiable.

This melancholy thought has been suggested by my innate consciousness of the condition of Miss Barbara Jenkyns as I left her at the conclusion of the last chapter, in conjunction with another innate consciousness, which is, that I shall find it impossible to describe her condition without *laughing at her*.

Yet why, poor soul! should she be laughed at?

Her misery was as real upon finding all her bright new-born hopes blighted by Miss Judith's intention of speedily setting off for Rome, as those of the prettiest girl of eighteen would be upon learning that her union with the object of her heart's fond love was impeded, delayed, and perhaps frustrated for ever.

Nay, if the case be quite fairly stated, the condition of Miss Barbara would be found much the more pitiable of the two; for the younger lady, however little disposed she might feel to suspend her laments while she confessed the fact, would be conscious, in spite of herself, and of all her deep sincerity of woe, that she *was* both young and pretty. And there is mitigation of suffering in such consciousness. Yet, nevertheless, the unkind

would go on cruelly laughing at a lady in the condition of Miss Barbara Jenkyns, while they heave tender sighs, and assume looks benignly pitiful, at hearing that some fair young creature, in the hopeful morning of life, has lost one of the host of adorers who are destined to feel the sweet influence of her attractions!

But the race is not always to the strong, nor pity to the most pitiable.

How Miss Barbara contrived so far to recover herself as to indicate to the rebellious Judith that the proper thing to be done at that moment was to go into the dining-room, and sit down to dinner, I know not. But somehow or other it was done. Moreover, Judith wiped away her tears, and ate her dinner,—nay, even Miss Barbara ate her dinner too; so true is it, that the ordinary business of life will go on, however slight the impulse may seem by which it is propelled, and though movements of almost convulsive violence shall be going on at the same time around us. Much as a watch performs its daily task, even while tempest-tossed in the Bay of Biscay!

The carriage of Mrs. Chilbert was punctual, and Judith was punctually ready to step into it. She had held but little communion with her aunt Barbara in the interval. Both the ladies had declared themselves very sleepy after the late hours kept at the Deanery, and retired early to bed, and Judith had passed the whole of the following morning in writing to her friend at Madras, skimming through the permitted pages of the "Spectator," (which did not appear to her ignorance to be as perfectly delicate as she expected,) and making a sketch of her friend Susan, while in the act of examining and arranging the contents of her trunks.

But she found time, nevertheless, to think a good deal of the Dean's lady, and, though scarcely daring to hope that she should be asked to go there often enough to make it much signify, she could not help recalling the manner in which she played, and the manner in which she talked, with a degree of *gusto* that made her engagement for the evening a matter of great and pleasurable importance.

Poor dear Miss Barbara meanwhile dared scarcely confess to herself the gentle hope which nestled at the very bottom of her heart, that as she had heard of no whist party for that evening there probably was none, and that, if so, it was not quite impossible but that

Dr. Wroughtley might pay her a little friendly visit—and she was quite as well pleased as Judith herself when the punctual carriage was heard to stop at her door; for not for much would she have sent off the silly child to the Deanery, with the news that she had been left *tête-à-tête* with the senior Prebend!

Judith reached the Deanery, as Mrs. Chilbert intended she should, about half an hour before Mr. Saunders and Miss Sophia; for the Dean's dinner hour was a late one, and the coffee-cup was still in his lady's hand when Judith entered the drawing-room.

This half hour was not an idle one, for before it was over the quick intelligence of Mrs. Chilbert had enabled her to ascertain one or two facts, concerning which she felt considerable interest. First she discovered that the mind of Judith was exceedingly like a sheet of blank paper, as far as human learning is concerned; but that the quality and texture was of the finest. And then the presumptuous lady gave a scrutinizing glance at what she would have denominated the heart, but she might have said the soul more correctly, for not feelings and affections only but tastes, propensities, faculties, were all dived for, with no common degree of skill; and the result was that the enthusiastic Mrs. Dean determined, to the very utmost extent of her power, to take upon herself the task of atoning to the young orphan for the horrible misfortune of being consigned to the charge and the tutorage of such an aunt as Miss Barbara Jenkyns.

Poor Judith meanwhile was utterly unconscious of the process to which she was being subjected; but she went through all her paces, poor little thing, as docilely as a well-tempered filly, who trots round and round in a large circle or a small one, according to the will or whim of the groom that holds the rein; and all this might have lasted much longer, without her having the remotest idea of what was going on, for it was very skilfully done, but that Mr. and Miss Saunders were ushered into the drawing-room, and put a stop to it.

This did not happen, however, till Judith's heart was in a glow of gratitude for all the kind interest that dear charming Mrs. Chilbert seemed to take about her. Nor was she in the least mistaken in thinking so. Mrs. Chilbert did indeed feel a deep and a very kind interest in her, and, had the zeal with which she wished to serve her been tempered with a little more common sense and worldly

discretion, she would have been an invaluable friend.

Upon first turning her eyes towards the slouching ill-dressed figure of Mr. Saunders, Judith very nearly uttered the words "Oh dear!" loud enough to be heard; indeed they were heard by Mrs. Chilbert, but fortunately by no one else. And then Judith looked at his daughter, and felt, if possible, still less pleased with her appearance than with that of her father. Yet Sophia Saunders was young, and decidedly not ugly, and upon this occasion she really had bestowed some little pains in trying to make her abounding auburn hair look smooth; but the attempt had failed, or else the bonnet had undone all that the comb had done, for a more untidy-looking mass of bright young locks could not easily be seen.

Her dress was of rumpled, and by no means very clean, blue muslin; and this drapery was confined round Miss Sophia's rather stout waist by a broad belt of crimson cotton velvet; and on her rather fair and rather fat hands were a pair of white silk gloves, in all respects considerably the worse for the wearing.

It is rarely at Judith's age that any very decided taste for a particular style of dress has developed itself; but it was not so with her, for she had a sort of instinctive dislike for show and finery in apparel, which had evinced itself while she was still almost a child; and so far had this been permitted to influence the style of her garments, that Susan, after unpacking dress after dress of delicate white muslin, as well as several more recently made of black materials, concluded her examination and arrangement of them all, by saying,—
"All very nice, Miss, very fine beautiful muslin and silk indeed. But I don't see one single best frock amongst 'em all."

It was probably in consequence of this peculiarity in the young lady's taste, that the appearance of Miss Sophia Saunders was so decidedly displeasing to her; but unconscious of this herself, she fancied that there must be something very singular in the appearance of the figure which struck her as being so preposterous, and she looked into the face of her new friend, as if to ask her what she thought of it.

"Never mind, Judith!" said the sympathizing spirit in reply; but the words were so little germane to the matter of shaking hands with both father and daughter, in which Mrs. Dean was at that moment engaged, that they neither did or could suppose it was

concerning them that they were uttered. So it was all very well, and the young stranger was introduced to the smiling minor canon and his daughter, and the business of the evening immediately began by Mrs. Chilbert's saying.

"This is a young lady, Mr. Saunders, of whose musical powers I know nothing whatever, except that she can play a Polka in a style that ought to make the chairs and tables dance."

"Dear me, how nice!" exclaimed Miss Sophy. "How I should like to dance to it!"

"I dare say you would, my dear; and who knows but you may?" replied Mrs. Chilbert. "But if she is ever to help our dancing, we must try, you know, to help her in some other way; and I want you, Mr. Saunders, to assist me in making some experiments with her voice. I suspect that she has, or will have, a fine contralto—for when I asked her about it, she told me that her voice was horribly like a man's, and that she had often been half frightened at the sound of it herself, when amusing herself by singing in the open air."

"At any rate I don't think she will frighten us," replied Mr. Saunders, looking at her lovely blushing face with a good-humoured smile.

"Let us hear it!—Have you been used to sing second, young lady?"

"I have never been used to sing at all," replied Judith, laughing.

"Why, you are not very old as yet, that is quite certain," replied Mr. Saunders; "but if Mrs. Dean has taken it into her head that you can sing, I would make a considerable bet that she is right, for she must have some reason for it."

"But I do assure you she has no reason for it," replied Judith, again laughing, "for she never heard me even attempt to sing a single note."

Mr. Saunders looked puzzled. He had never paid the least attention to the modern system of looking for the power of singing in the eyebrows, and he therefore turned from the one lady to the other, with a very innocent look of mystification.

But nothing could be further from Mrs. Chilbert's wish or intention than to pronounce a lecture on phrenology for the benefit of Mr. Saunders and his daughter Sophia, and she, therefore, only answered his appeal by shaking her head and saying:—"Let us begin at once, Mr. Saunders! Let us try some—"

thing, and then we shall find out what we can do."

The result of the experiment proved most satisfactorily that the statements of both the ladies, contradictory as they appeared to be, were essentially correct. The very first intonation of Judith's voice made the musical minor canon start, and before she had reached the conclusion of the little passage which Mrs. Chilbert had pointed to, as an experiment, it became as evident to her hearers as it decidedly was to herself, that, as an art, she knew no more about singing than a woodlark; nay, the quality of her voice, which was a deep-toned contralto, required time to bring it to its full perfection.

Nevertheless, the experiment had produced the very reverse of disappointment. Mrs. Chilbert, indeed, was loudly triumphant; and Mr. Saunders exclaimed, with a very extraordinary degree of energy for him, "Faith, madam, that's very remarkable."

Mrs. Chilbert, as she sat at the instrument, drew down the head of Judith, who was standing beside her, to a level with her own, and very fervently kissed her cheek; but she addressed no word of compliment to her.

Had she indeed uttered anything at that moment, it would probably have been a lamentation upon her having herself been permitted to exist so long in unconscious possession of a treasure, which in her estimation was precious beyond all price; and deep was the little vow she vowed, while bestowing this silent caress, that by some means or other she would contrive to obtain a master for her. She did not indeed, as Miss Barbara certainly would have done under similar circumstances, resolve to apply to the Lord Chancellor on the subject; but some of her thoughts were very nearly as magnanimous, for there was scarcely a musical professor in Europe sufficiently illustrious to escape the danger at that moment of being considered a fitting instructor for Judith.

Nothing could be farther from her intention, however, than to waste the present precious opportunity of experimenting upon the fine new instrument which she had so fortunately found, and with a sort of intuitive adroitness that was very clever, she contrived to turn it to account by suggesting when, and how, a few notes from it might be thrown in with advantage.

The brilliant rapidity, the inborn taste, the faultless ear, displayed by Judith during this series of experiments, delighted the Dean's

lady to a degree that proved her, perhaps, to be as eccentric as she was sensitive; nay, even Mr. Saunders ceased to look as if he were singing in his sleep, and there were even moments during which the plump unmeaning features of the lazy Sophia seemed to express something a little approaching to surprise, and not altogether devoid of pleasure.

As to Judith herself, her sensations were certainly a little analagous to those which we may imagine Pygmalion's young lady to have experienced, when first made conscious of her newly awakened powers. More than once she started at the sounds herself had made, and whether from gratified vanity, gratified taste, or simply from the pleasant feeling of being amused, she returned to her dismal little bedroom at midnight quite ready to acknowledge that she had never, in the whole course of her life, spent so happy an evening!

CHAPTER XIX.

ALAS, poor Barbara! How fared she the while?

It would be too piteous a task to describe the long and weary hours of that dismal evening.

People may talk of the blessings of hope, but assuredly the disappointment, which is often its offspring, does more harm than ever its parent did good.

Certainly Miss Barbara had felt very happy, poor thing, as she stood before her toilet-glass, after the departure of her young niece, and cunningly arranged her chestnut "front," so as to look perfectly natural as well as perfectly becoming; and, certainly, there was pleasure in tying under her chin the prettiest cap that her own clever fingers had ever fabricated; a cap, of which Dr. Wroughtley had himself said, the first time he beheld it, "What a pretty cap you have got on, Miss Barbara!" Certainly there was pleasure in this, and in the consciousness that there was very great probability, for her heart told her that there *was* very great probability, that *he* would come before many hours, nay, perhaps, before many minutes had worn themselves away, and be once again seated beside her.

But afterwards, as minute after minute, and hour after hour, melted away, and no Doctor came, was not her condition worse than if she had never felt any hope at all?

But we must not follow her and her poor heart through all the black and white vicissitudes that were before her; the most favour-

able feature in her fate at this time was the necessity of being very busy.

The invitations were sent out, and the ball was to be given, and, as no event of this kind had occurred to her, or her house, for the last twenty years (that is to say, not since the marriage of Mrs. Maitland, for neither of the Jenkyns' ladies left at home after that event were addicted to dancing), it may easily be supposed that the fortnight which intervened between her sending out her invitations, and the acceptance of them by all the *beau monde* of Westhampton and its neighbourhood, could be devoted neither to love nor laziness.

Well, indeed, did the worthy senior Prebend redeem his promise of being useful to her; and that not only in the article of dancing gentlemen, but in every other shape and way, wherein it seemed, to his bachelor notions, that he could be serviceable.

And sweet and soothing, though very perilous, was the necessity for constant intercourse which this brought with it! Not a day passed without a visit from Dr. Wroughtley, to inquire what had been done in this way or in that way, for the advancement of the great business they had in hand.

Upon one occasion it happened that he asked for the young Judith, saying, "Where is your niece, Miss Barbara? We must ask her opinion upon the important question of festoons, or no festoons, to be hung over the doors. If the festoons are voted, it is she that will have the making of them, for that is always the business of the young ladies. Do send for her, will you?"

This request was so very natural, that poor Miss Barbara's wits were neither bright enough, nor quick enough, to suggest any reason for not complying with it; and, though great was her surprise, her pleasure was decidedly greater still, when William returned from the embassy which was to summon Judith, with the information that the young lady was not at home.

The surprise occasioned by this announcement had such an effect on Miss Barbara, that, almost unconsciously, and quite involuntarily, of course, she threw herself on the shoulder of Dr. Wroughtley, exclaiming, "Oh, goodness, my dearest friend! is it possible she can have eloped?"

"Fiddle-de-dee!" replied the Doctor, merrily, giving his agitated friend a playful shaking, as with both his hands he placed her trembling form in an arm-chair. And

then, standing before her with a roguish twinkle in his eye, he added, "Do you remember what I said to you about her, after I had talked with her and looked at her for about twenty minutes? Do you remember?"

Now the truth is, that poor dear Miss Barbara's faculties were so much more occupied in dwelling upon the possible words that he had not said, than on the actual words he had, that (strange to say!) precious as was every sound he uttered to her heart, she had not the very remotest idea of what he meant. To tell him this, she felt to be impossible. It would be doing herself and her devoted feelings such cruel injustice! She therefore replied, with a look that would have spoken volumes to any one who would have given themselves the trouble to read it, "Remember? Do you think it possible I could forget?"

"Why no, my dear lady, I don't think it at all likely that you should; for by this time I think you must begin to suspect what I have got in my head, and be aware that what I say is worth listening to, and means something," he replied.

"Means? Oh! tell me what it means," she cried, in a burst of uncontrollable emotion. "Say! speak!"

The unsuspecting Prebend began very seriously to suspect that the agreeable and very profitable charge which had been entrusted to his old friend had produced too severe an infraction of the tranquil course of her ordinary existence for her to bear it with any tolerable degree of fortitude and composure, and, instead of replying to her passionate-sounding appeal for information as to what his former instructions had meant, he stood looking very kindly in her up-turned face for a minute or two, and balancing very conscientiously the pros and cons as to her keeping the naughty runaway with her, or sending her off to her stronger-minded sister in London.

And, in the manner in which he now looked at it, the question was really not without difficulty.

On the one hand was a limited and rather straitened income rendered affluent and easy, with no worse penalty enacted in return than the giving a home to a beautiful young girl, as nearly related to her as it was possible she could be without being her own child, and with no fault or defect of any kind (that he could hear of or discover), save the bright, intelligent, and perhaps too independent

spirit which sparkled in her beautiful eyes. But, on the other hand, here was his worthy old friend, Miss Barbara, looking as if she were already half distracted, and in great danger of altogether losing her wits from her nervous terrors, lest the proper management of the young lady might prove a task too difficult for her to perform! To a good-hearted man like Dr. Wroughtley this was really painful.

He plainly perceived that she was in no condition to be reasoned with at that moment, for her hands were clasped, as if convulsively, and her eyes, which were riveted upon his face, had an expression that struck him as being exceedingly wild and alarming.

"This will never do," thought he. "We shall have her in a madhouse before we know where we are! She had better give it up at once; and yet I hardly know how to tell her so, either, for it will be a monstrous pity for her to lose it."

All this was breathed in mental soliloquy, and while it was passing through his brain, he too, poor man, kept his innocent eyes, rather more widely opened than ordinary, fixed upon her in return.

Could he have guessed, however, the effect he was producing, it is highly probable, stout-hearted man though he was, that the senior Prebend would have taken to his heels, and run out of the room at once.

Yet no owl that ever sat winking from the top of an ivy-clad tower at the moon was less conscious of emitting fire and flame than was Dr. Wroughtley at that moment! But it mattered not what he thought or what he felt, poor gentleman! The result was that Miss Barbara Jenkyns rose from her chair, and once more deposited her head upon his shoulder! * * *

In most of the occurrences of human life, it must be advantageous that the persons concerned in them should know a little of the real nature of what is going on; but it was far otherwise in the present instance. Had Dr. Wroughtley been at all aware of what was going on in the heart and soul of Miss Barbara Jenkyns when she thus laid her head upon his shoulder, it would have been nearly, if not altogether, impossible for him to have conducted himself in a manner every way so safe and desirable as he now did.

"Now do sit down, there's a dear soul, and make yourself happy and comfortable!" said he, very kindly, but at the same time

very resolutely replacing her in the arm-chair. "We shall never get on, you know, never really settle anything, if you let every little trifle overpower you in this way. At our age, Miss Barbara, we ought to know better, we ought indeed. You may be very sure that everything will come right at last; trust me for that. I won't lead you wrong in any way, you may depend upon it!"

"Lead me wrong!" cried Miss Barbara, almost with a shriek. "Lead me wrong? Oh, Dr. Wroughtley! Do you, can you, suppose that for a single instant I suspected it? Oh! Dr. Wroughtley! you little know with what perfect, with what entire confidence I trust you!"

"Very well, then! That's all quite right, my dear soul! Don't worry yourself any more about anything!"

And, having said this, he turned towards the fire, and according to custom took up the poker and began arranging it to his mind, deciding as he did so that the best plan would be to let things go on as they were a little longer, at any rate till the ball was over; and then, if his poor old friend still continued to bother herself so terribly, it would be time enough to look about, and perhaps find the best and quietest way of making the young heiress change her quarters.

Having come to this determination, and set the poker in its proper place, he suddenly turned round and said, "Now, then, I shall wish you good morning. We must settle about the festoons another time. Don't agitate yourself about anything. I will take care of you."

Either the suddenness of his movement or the unexpected tenour of his words caused Miss Barbara to start, or more properly speaking to jump up vehemently, so much so, indeed, that she did not recover her seat without running some risk of missing it. She stretched out her hand. It was for the purpose of impeding his departure, but he thought it was to preserve her equilibrium, and he kindly stretched out his own to meet it. This action was sadly misunderstood.

"Oh, do not! do not!" she murmured, in a voice of intense agitation.

"Oh! but I must," said he. "Upon my word it is time, and more than time, Miss Barbara. We waste too much time, I am afraid, upon our little frivolities. And that's not the way to do business. I have a thousand things to do!"

"I will waste no more," she said. "Oh! Dr. Wroughtley! tell me at once. Only tell me now. Only tell me all you were thinking of!"

"Now you are going to ask me something about the supper," said he; "I know you are! And that's not fair; it is not using me well just at this moment; for I have told you already that I am angry because you will not make up your own mind. I have hinted *that* to you again and again, Miss Barbara. You know I have."

"But I **HAVE** made up my mind, Dr. Wroughtley," she passionately exclaimed.

It was, however, too late.

Dr. Wroughtley, notwithstanding his weighing rather more than thirteen stone, could still move very actively when he wished to do so; and it was very evident that he wished to do so now, for the study-door was closed behind him before her beating heart had realized the melancholy fact that he was gone.

Is it not cruel, then, to refuse pity to such a situation as hers? She had believed herself for one ecstatic moment to be in the very act of listening to an offer of marriage from the senior Prebend of Westhampton. "But, oh! the heavy change! now he is gone!" Is it not cruelty to refuse pity to such a situation as hers? Yet no one who reads this narrative will pity her. Had she been eighteen, when the disappointment would not have signified a farthing, everybody might have pitied her. This is very unfair, very unjust, very unfeeling! But I know no cure for it.

CHAPTER XX.

JUDITH, meanwhile, had taken the liberty of going to the Deanery, with no leave asked from any one. She was, in fact, beginning to give very decided proofs that Dr. Wroughtley was right in the quick estimate he had formed of her, and that she *was* very likely in doubtful matters, notwithstanding her loving temper, to "follow her own vagaries."

Till now she had always deemed it necessary to preface her daily visit there by asking Miss Barbara "if she would please to let William take her to Mrs. Chilbert." And this daily permission was daily granted, very willingly, because the Dean's lady had assured Judith's anxious aunt that it was for the purpose of teaching her to sing that these daily visits were required; and as male

masters of all kinds were the *bêtes noires* of Miss Barbara's imagination, it may easily be imagined that the having a Dean's lady to perform the perilous function, instead of a singing-master, was a prodigious relief to her mind.

As to Mrs. Chilbert's manner of teaching, it is probable that professors in general might not have altogether approved of it; but yet it somehow or other appeared to be wonderfully successful, and so satisfactory was the result, both in her own judgment and in that of the musical minor canon, that the necessity of calling in "the first singing-master in Europe" was altogether lost sight of and forgotten.

The education of Judith was, indeed, during this time, going on very rapidly in many ways. That which she had received from the governess who had been engaged for her at Madras was good, or at any rate respectable, from the correctness with which the rudiments of all the ordinary branches of female education had been taught her. But it went no farther than this.

The ground had been prepared, and there were very few weeds in it, but the seed was yet to be sown for everything approaching the higher class of intellectual developement.

The capacity of Judith was decidedly of a very superior order, and it was the perceiving this, and perceiving, also, how very little had yet been done to assist it, which made her an object of such deep interest to Mrs. Chilbert.

Nor would it have been easy to find any one better calculated to be to Judith exactly all she wanted, than was this eccentric but highly accomplished woman. Never, no, never could Mrs. Chilbert have supplied any deficiencies in the rudiments of ordinary instruction. It might be doubted if her own children, fondly as she loved them, would ever have learned to read, had the teaching them been left to her; but for the cultivation of taste, for the excitement of every intellectual faculty, and for teaching the charm that is to be found in the exercise of all and every of them, she was admirable.

Nothing could be much more delightful than the long mornings they thus passed together, and nothing could be more evident than that no hour so passed was without as much improvement as pleasure. No little rose-bud suddenly exposed to the gentle warmth of the morning sun in the sweet month of June ever opened its sensitive leaves

more brightly, more rapidly, to the pleasant influence, than did the heart of Judith Maitland now open to the sunny warmth of Mrs. Chilbert's affectionate teaching.

She had believed herself to be still a child; she now felt that she was already a woman. She had been conscious of ignorance, and on some points almost doubted her own ability to acquire as much information as she believed to be the usual average of well-educated people; but Mrs. Chilbert seemed, as she said, to open a royal road for her in all directions, and in all directions did she seem as able as she was willing to follow it.

During this time the only drawback to Judith's happiness was the almost intolerable weight of dulness which fell upon her spirits upon returning to her home. And, in truth, there was no need of the violent contrast which the conversation of Mrs. Chilbert offered, in order to make her feel this, for Miss Barbara, who was, and had ever been at every period of her life, dull enough to have wearied most people, was in her present frame of mind not only dull, but moody.

Those most unfortunate words, "*by this time you must suspect what I have got in my head,*" by which the worthy Senior Prebend meant to recall to her his own clever observation respecting her valuable young ward's propensity to wilfulness of temper, had by her been interpreted to mean a solemn, but at the same time a very delicate, allusion to his intended proposal of his hand in marriage; and never for five minutes together were these remarkable words out of her head.

She fully believed that the postponement of his plain and complete proposal had been occasioned by the vehemence of agitation which she had betrayed; and the irritation produced both by the delay of her hopes, and the persuasion that she had herself to blame for it, acted upon her temper in the most painful manner imaginable.

If poor Judith asked her a question, or made an observation in order to avoid the awkwardness of continued silence, the only reply she received was a sort of grunt; and when, to avoid this, the unlucky girl at length determined not to speak at all, Miss Barbara spitefully asked her if she were as silent at the Deanery as she was at home?

Never, in short, did the tender passion display itself in so grim a form; and, had it not been for her mornings with Mrs. Chilbert, Judith would certainly have availed herself

immediately of the privilege which had been granted her, of removing from the house of one guardian aunt to that of the other. But to leave Mrs. Chilbert, to give up her delicious music lessons, her new-born love of Milton!—She could not bear to think of it; and yet it often happened that, when she retired to her comfortless little room at night, she passed the last hour of the day in tears, because her home was so very miserable.

It was after an evening spent in this deplorable manner, that Mrs. Chilbert on the arrival of Judith on the following morning perceived that she looked pale, and out of spirits; and a few questions produced an avowal that she did not at all like living with her aunt Barbara, and that nothing but the delight she felt in the dear mornings passed at the Deanery prevented her immediately leaving her.

This led to a more full explanation of Judith's little history than Mrs. Chilbert had, as yet, received from any one. And very deeply interested was she in every word of it. To be young, lovely, and intelligent does not in general move the heart to pity; and when the pleasant accident of wealth is added to these good gifts, the fair owner is usually considered to be an object of envy. Nevertheless, Mrs. Chilbert felt that she pitied Judith heartily, yea, heartily.

In both her likings and dislikings, Mrs. Chilbert was apt to be rather vehement, and Judith had seized upon her affections with more than an ordinary power of attraction. Her beauty, her unsunned simplicity, her youthful freshness of feeling, and beyond all else the remarkable degree of talent, which she had not only had the pleasure of discovering, but of developing, all contributed to render her one of the most interesting beings she had ever met, and the attachment between them might very truly be said to have been equal on both sides.

But Mrs. Chilbert's dislike to Judith's aunt Barbara was very nearly equal in vehemence to her liking for Judith's self; and great was her indignation when, by degrees, all the discomforts of the poor girl's home were made known to her.

She remembered that Miss Elfreda, though not without some few absurdities, was considerably less repulsive than her elder sister and after a long discussion, in which the pain of losing each other was cordially and most sincerely expressed on both sides, Mrs. Chilbert advised her young friend to do nothing

hastily, but, at the same time, to console herself by remembering that change was in her power, if at length she were driven to think it best to have recourse to it; and, at the same time, she took care to make her understand that she never suffered a year to pass without paying a visit to the Marshdales, who resided in London. "And delightful as our mornings have been here, my dearest Judith," said Mrs. Chilbert, "we might look forward with delight to some evenings passed in town, at the Opera, for instance, which, if we can contrive to enjoy together, may atone to us for the loss of a few mornings here."

Judith seized upon this suggestion with all the sanguine eagerness of her age.

"An opera with you!" she exclaimed; "an Italian opera, and you by my side to help me enjoy it! I shall endure sour looks, grunting replies, and short allowance of toilet water, all the better for this idea. And then, you know, there is a vast deal of courage to be found in the mere fact that things need not last for ever."

"Yes, Judith, there is true philosophy in converting that thought into a pillow. But tell me, dearest, in what part of London does your aunt Elfreda live? Mercy on us! what a name it is! isn't it? But what is there in a name? Nothing! So we will not mind that. But whereabouts does she live, Judith?"

"Green Street, Grosvenor Square," was the reply.

"Very well! Things might be worse than that. Has she a house of her own, or is she in lodgings?" said Mrs. Dean.

"In lodgings," returned Judith.

"Well! never mind, dear. In fact, it does not really signify a farthing. If she has a drawing-room apartment, and a tolerably decent man-servant to open the door, it really is of no consequence. Remember, I am only thinking of the Marshdales. As far as I am concerned, you will readily believe it would make no difference."

Judith took the hand that was stretched out to her, and kissed it.

"Besides, my aunt visits Mrs. Marshdale," said she.

"Bravo! Then I may drive to your door three times a-day, if I like," returned Mrs. Chilbert.

CHAPTER XXI.

Nothing, perhaps, could more clearly show the ill-at-ease condition of Judith at this time than the indifference she felt about her aunt

Barbara's ball. This fête, which was avowedly given on her account, and which occupied, more or less, the whole town, while every head, every heart, and every hand in the mansion, which was now her only home, was as completely occupied upon it as if their very existence hung on its success, this ball was to her, poor child, a matter of complete indifference. "How could she care for it?" she asked her friend. "How could she care for anything at aunt Barbara's?"

Every morning, between ten and eleven o'clock, Judith might be seen walking forth alone, in very triumphant independence, towards the Deanery. It was by no means Miss Barbara's fault, however, that she was thus unattended, for the man William had been offered, and the maid Susan had been offered, notwithstanding the enormous press of business which bore heavily upon every department of the household; but it was the young lady's will and pleasure to go alone, and as Dr. Wroughtley had at last succeeded in making Miss Barbara understand that her niece ought, on all possible occasions, to be indulged in following her own innocent little whims, she went alone.

Luckily for the motherless girl, the space between this home of hers and the Deanery might be very safely traversed at any hour of the day or night; but if the pavement had been full of pit-falls, and every lamp-post a Lovelace, the heiress would still have been permitted, under such authority, to have her own way.

From a little before eleven, therefore, till a few minutes before Miss Barbara's dinner-hour, Mrs. Chilbert and Judith remained together, sometimes performing duets, sometimes reading and commenting, sometimes talking eagerly, and amusingly enough, of all things in heaven and earth; and then it was the delight of Mrs. Dean to elicit all Judith's crude young opinions, which, to do her justice, always displayed as much purity of heart and natural refinement of feeling, as ignorance of all the higher objects of human ambition, as well as of the noblest labours of human intelligence. And greatly and most advantageously was her own intellect developed by these delightful gossipings; and it may not have unfrequently happened, perhaps, that a whole year of very studious education may have failed to produce so much decided effect upon character and pursuit as were produced by these hours on Judith.

Altogether, therefore, it can scarcely be considered very extraordinary that Judith did not take any very active interest in the preparations for Miss Barbara's ball; but she was very fond of dancing, and when the hour and the fiddler came, she felt almost as well disposed to enjoy herself as Miss Sophia Saunders herself.

The preparations for the ball, however, went merrily on without any help from Judith, and a very good ball it was when it came; for, in truth, Dr. Wroughtley was a very observing old bachelor, and knew perfectly well what constituted a good ball, and what constituted a bad one. To anything like a deficiency in the article of light he had a most especial objection, and therefore had borrowed sconces, and lamps, and candlesticks in all directions, and, moreover, his own man had assisted William in trimming, and hanging, and nailing them in every available position; the consequence of which was, that the rooms were exceedingly well lighted.

Miss Barbara herself had some very pretty notions about supper, and every talent of the kind had been cherished and warmed into activity by the judicious little hints and well-timed compliments of the senior Prebend, who, having once made up his mind to take an active part in the business, was determined it should not fail from any remissness of his.

Little did he guess, poor gentleman, that while thus actively engaged in promoting, as he thought, the amusement, and, as he conceived it, the rational and reasonable enjoyment of the society of Westhampton—little did he guess, I say, that upon one of its members he was bringing so heavy a load of disappointment as must have turned her sable locks to grey, had not that process been long ago performed by what is called the *ruthless* hand of Time. But, alas! the touch of Time is very gentle, when compared to that of Love!

And yet there would be great injustice, were I to throw any blame on Dr. Wroughtley in the business, for never was mischief done more innocently. Little did he guess, good man, that when he winked and nodded as he recommended a rather generous supply of wine, he should be suspected of alluding to the contents of his own notoriously well-stocked cellar, as much as to say, 'It won't signify, you know, if you do exhaust your stock a little upon this occasion.'

As little could he imagine that, when in a

hurried moment he seized her arm, and grasped it firmly, because he thought that she was running off with a blundering order to her cook upon some point that he had not fully explained, little could he imagine that she mistook this rather impatient movement for a paroxysm of tender passion!

Yet so it was; and very truly sorry would he have been, worthy gentleman, could he have had any notion of the mischief he was doing. As it was, however, he persevered in the task he had so good-humouredly set himself with unabating ardour to the very end, and if, instead of being an old bachelor, he had been a young belle, he could scarcely have bestowed more thought upon it. The only point of importance that he did not himself inquire into, and personally superintend, was the arrangements for the music, for Miss Barbara, having had the good sense to consult the Dean's lady on that subject, had been put in the way of obtaining the very best that Westhampton afforded; so that, on the whole, the ball was universally pronounced to be a very good ball indeed. But whether Miss Barbara would have had courage, and energy, and liberality to have gone through the whole thing in the style she did, merely in the hope of pleasing Miss Judith, who was evidently a vast deal too much occupied to care very much about it, may be greatly doubted.

It is true that, during the whole of that long fortnight's preparations, Dr. Wroughtley had never found what appeared to him a fitting occasion to make the proposal, which she still felt so well assured was hovering on his lips; but night after night, as she laid her very much tired body upon the bed, she soothed herself into the sweetest of all possible sleeps, by remembering all he had done to assist her during the day.

Could he, could any man, have done all this, or exhibited the interest which he had done throughout the whole affair, if he had not been inspired by feelings in the most perfect sympathy with her own? No. It was therefore as clear as the sun at noonday that—that—that he intended, as soon as the ball was over, and tranquillity restored, to—to—

And then the labours of the day overpowered her, and she sunk to sleep in the very happiest state of mind imaginable.

And really on the night of the ball Doctor Wroughtley did and said a great many things which might easily have been interpreted

into feeling a more than common interest in all that was going on. And he certainly did feel more than a common interest. He felt, good man, that in reality the ball was as much his ball as Miss Barbara's, for that, most assuredly, without him it never would have taken place at all.

And even if it had, what on earth would she have done without him, in the one article of dancing gentlemen, for instance? There was not a dancing young lady in the town who knew better than the senior Prebend, that without dancing gentlemen, and enough of them, a ball-room is ten thousand times more dismal than a desert.

And how many dancing gentlemen did Miss Barbara know? *Know*, that is to say, well enough to write and invite them, perhaps, from a considerable distance? Three? Not more than three, certainly, and scarcely so many, strictly speaking, and propriety being strictly attended to. What then would have become of her ball, if Dr. Wroughtley had *not* exerted himself? But he did exert himself, and with the most brilliant success, as the following statement will show.

It happened (for pheasant-shooting was then at its zenith) that several of the neighbouring mansions had staying guests precisely of the species of which Dr. Wroughtley was in search; and so ably did he manage, that there was not one of them worth having whom he did not contrive to secure.

By far the most distinguished individual of the set, however, was a certain Frederic Dorking, the only son of a gentleman of large landed property in a neighbouring county, and himself already the possessor of an income of some thousands a-year, as the heir of a maternal uncle.

Mr. Frederic Dorking was, moreover, extremely handsome, and reckoned by competent judges to be decidedly the best native waltzer in the three kingdoms. In short, Mr. Frederic Dorking might and must have been considered as a personage of importance in ball-rooms of vastly superior pretensions to that of Miss Barbara Jenkyns, and yet, thanks to Dr. Wroughtley, there he was.

That he was handsome, and danced well, was speedily evident to all who had eyes; that he was wealthy, well-born, and as yet unappropriated, were facts which became equally well known before he had been a quarter of an hour in the room.

Mrs. Chilbert's glass had scanned him from head to foot in a few seconds, and it imme-

diately became evident to her that he was the only man fit to dance with Judith in the room.

She had already heard, too, of his good blood, and his good income; but had he been a very poor gentleman, instead of a very rich one, the Dean's lady would have come to the same decision, for she was one of the last women in the world to convert a ball-room into a market, and, in looking about for partners for her pet, had no more thought of finding a husband for her, than a father confessor.

But not the less for that had she decided that Mr. Frederic Dorking should dance the next waltz with Miss Maitland.

She was well acquainted with the family with whom the young man was staying, and dispatched an embassy to its *chef* to request he would come to her. The summons was readily obeyed, when the following conversation ensued.

"How d'ye do, Mr. Clayton? I have not seen any of you for an age. Why did you not come to me last Wednesday? Mrs. Clayton sent me a killing *no*, but without a word of reason for it."

"I will tell you the reason now," replied the gentleman. "We had three or four people staying with us, and we know the Deanery hospitality too well to mention such a fact, as we were certain, by old experience, that the doing so would be followed by an invitation to the whole party, which we should neither have liked to refuse nor accept."

"And why not accept?" said Mrs. Chilbert.

"We were too many," replied Mr. Clayton.

"Was that *preux chevalier* yonder, who came with you this evening, one of your guests?" said she.

"Yes, he was with us then," he replied.

"Then you stand convicted of an act of very direful cruelty," said she. "I put '*dancing*' on the card on purpose to make Mrs. Clayton comprehend that all waltzers would be welcome, and yet you had the heart to keep such a man as that away from me!"

"I will keep him away from you no longer," returned Mr. Clayton, laughingly. "But he has forestalled you, for he has just asked me who you were, and said he should like to know you."

"Which proves him to be as discerning as he is handsome," said she. "Lose no more time, I beseech you. But, Mr. Clayton!"

she added, rising, and following him for a step or two, "remember that he ought to be presented to Miss Maitland also. She was not near her aunt when you came in, and he therefore lost his chance of being introduced then. That is Miss Maitland whom you saw sitting next to me."

"It shall be atoned for now," he replied; adding, with a smile, "it is only so. I think, that any one can be introduced to her, for she seems to make a part of yourself."

"I wish she did!" replied the enthusiastic Mrs. Chilbert, warmly. "I should like myself in that case a vast deal better than I ever did before."

Mr. Clayton looked as if he were about to say something civil, but he probably thought he had better not, and walked off.

No time was lost, however, before he returned again, bringing with him the Mr. Frederic Dorking, upon whom a vast majority of the female eyes in Miss Barbara's drawing-room were at that moment turned.

His introduction to Mrs. Chilbert and her fair friend immediately followed, and the young man then gave very satisfactory proof that he knew how to "behave himself," by almost instantly withdrawing his eyes, though not without some little reluctance, from the blooming face of Judith, and saying as he fixed them on that of her elegant companion, "Do you dance, Mrs. Chilbert?"

"Never," was her reply, uttered with an air that, though perfectly conclusive, was by no means uncivil.

"And you, Miss Maitland? May I hope for the honour of a waltz with you?"

"I shall be very happy," replied Judith, with as much condescension as could reasonably be expected.

The waltz soon followed, and then the promenade up and down the room, and then a little ball-room talk by the side of Mrs. Chilbert, in which that lady joined with great animation, and which, therefore, became considerably less *fade* and less flat than ball-room conversations usually are.

Mr. Frederic Dorking was decidedly a very handsome and a very gentlemanlike young man. He had passed with credit through Eton and Christchurch, had twice quitted his native country for a year each time, the first having been devoted to the south, the last to the north of Europe, Paris and its unrivalled attractions having been permitted to occupy three months out of the twelve on both occasions.

It would be almost impossible for any man not absolutely a booby to have done all this before he had completed his twenty-seventh year, and done it well too, with all the advantages of excellent introductions and a very liberal allowance, without profiting greatly, not only in personal demeanour, but in the developement of general intelligence; and as Frederic Dorking was far from being a booby, he had profited greatly, and was in consequence not only handsome and gentlemanlike, but very agreeable.

He was familiarly acquainted with all the themes which furnish the staple of conversation among well-educated ladies and gentlemen, and he was as little likely as any man living to blunder as to names, or to make any of those desperately confused statements into which chatty communicative travellers are apt to plunge, when they have seen a great deal in a short time.

No. The handsome elegant Frederic Dorking was neither a booby nor a blunderer. He had been reared and educated as an English gentleman of large fortune ought to be reared and educated, and the result was, as might reasonably be expected, that he could enter into the very highest society in every part of Europe with the certainty of being welcomed as properly belonging to it. When in addition to this it is remembered that he was pre-eminently handsome, and moreover that he was as free from vice as it was well possible for any man to be to whom all severity of control was perfectly unknown, it may easily be believed that his presence was everywhere hailed in a manner to make the act of presenting him a pleasure to his friends.

Frederic Dorking was by no means particularly disposed to give himself airs; it is not among people so happily distinguished as he was in all ways that we are most likely to find this very paltry propensity; but, nevertheless, I cannot deny that, as he looked round upon the party which filled Miss Barbara Jenkyns' drawing-room, he missed the air of metropolitan finish, without which those who are greatly accustomed to it are apt to fancy that all the prettiness that is before them is less pretty than it really is.

It was during the survey which led to this conclusion that his eye had rested upon Mrs. Chilbert, and that he had asked Mr. Clayton who she was.

It was her air of very quiet but very decided *bon ton* which had drawn his attention, and not the beauty of her young companion;

for of this he was really not aware till he approached her, for a fan was in her hand by which her face was almost entirely concealed, and she was talking to Mrs. Chilbert behind it.

Neither was her costume such as was likely to attract his attention, for she remained faithful to her black crape frock, in spite of all that her aunt Barbara and Susan could say to the contrary. It was in vain that Miss Barbara told her that it would be a great deal better if she would try to look a little more like other people. The looking like other people was by no means, at that time, the object of Miss Judith's ambition. Moreover, she had consulted Mrs. Chilbert, who certainly might have persuaded her to dress herself in an Indian blanket, if she had wished it; and Mrs. Chilbert, remembering the effect produced upon herself by the sable robe and the cream-coloured complexion, instantly settled the business by saying, "Dress yourself, dearest, precisely as you did the first evening I saw you. It may not matter much, for I doubt if there will be any eyes worthy of seeing you as I saw you then. Wear the crape frock, nevertheless, sweet love, *pour l'amour de moi*."

But the crape frock, though it certainly formed rather a picturesque drapery, had nothing in it calculated to produce a great effect when seen across the room, especially when the fair wearer of it was so nearly invisible; but there was too much in common, as to matters of taste, between Mrs. Chilbert and Mr. Dorking, to render it at all probable that she should be disappointed in the effect that Judith and her dress together would produce on the aristocratic-looking young man as soon as he got within sight of them.

From that moment the interest of the ball to Mrs. Chilbert became so great, that she utterly forgot she was in the house of the person whom she had ever considered as the most stupid old lady in the world, and that the company in general could not fairly be described by any epithet more flattering than hum-drum.

No sooner had Mr. Dorking led his partner off, with that air of assiduous attention which so explicitly avows admiration, than Mrs. Chilbert, making Mr. Clayton a friendly sign to sit down by her, very skilfully extracted from him all the particulars respecting Mr. Dorking's highly favoured station in society, which have been given above. And having listened to, and carefully noted, all these, she

gave him for his pains as full and particular an account of Judith; slightly, but distinctly, stating the fact, that she was a ward of Chancery, with a large fortune, alluding, if possible more slightly still, to her own belief that her gallant father, Colonel Maitland, was one of the fine old —shire Maitland race; and then indulging herself by sketching the most enchanting union of heart and head, body and soul—faculties and qualities—that ever met together in a human being; and concluding with assuring him that all she could say must be in vain, as it was beyond the power of any human eloquence to find words that could do justice to Judith Maitland.

"She is certainly very lovely," replied Mr. Clayton.

"Lovely? You call her lovely now? Oh! Mr. Clayton, if you could but see her as I have seen her! I will not talk of the expression of her angelic countenance as she sings; it is better described by calling it inspiration. She is a Muse, a Grace. No, no, no! she is rather the essence, the essential essence, of all the Muses and all the Graces in her own sweet self. Never did I behold such a creature before. You must forgive my enthusiasm; but the having met her is an epoch in my existence, and, at present, I can neither speak nor think of anything else."

"Nay, my dear Mrs. Chilbert, do not apologize for your enthusiasm. It is delightful to listen to you," said Mr. Clayton. "But you positively alarm me for the fate of poor Frederic Dorking. I know not what will become of him if he loves, and loves in vain. He is exactly the sort of man to appreciate all the graces and talents you have been describing to me; but is, at the same time, so terribly fastidious, that he has never yet been able to fancy any woman good enough for him."

"Then I think the chances are greatly in favour of his now being punished as he deserves; for, *entre nous*, I would by no means advise him to fall in love with Judith Maitland. Let him be as fastidious as he will, I strongly suspect that my lovely little heiress will prove more so still. So you had better give him a friendly hint, I think, to enjoy his waltz to-night, but to see as little of his partner afterwards as may be. He is really a very fine-looking young man, and it would be a pity to see him wear the willow."

"Do you mean that the young lady is

already engaged?" said Mr. Clayton, laughing.

"Oh dear, no! She is very young," replied Mrs. Chilbert. "But I am quite in earnest when I say that I don't think it would be possible for any man to see her often without being captivated."

"Very likely," returned Mr. Clayton, whose eyes were at that moment fixed upon Judith, as she passed close before them with very Camilla-like lightness of movement, displayed to the greatest possible advantage by the assistance of her accomplished partner. "Very likely," he repeated, with his eyes still fixed upon her. "But for all that, I see no reason why my friend Frederic Dorking should despair. It is quite new to me to hear him spoken of as being in danger of rejection. The gossip respecting him has, I assure you, gone quite the other way."

"And now I will repeat your 'very likely,'" said Mrs. Chilbert. "I really do think it very likely that young ladies' hearts may have fallen round him as fast as leaves in October; but the heart of my pretty Judith will not increase the number."

And then, having said to Mr. Clayton pretty well all that she wanted to say to him, she got up, took a deliberate survey of the whole room, and everybody in it, through her glass, and then said, "If you will kindly give me your arm, Mr. Clayton, I will venture to make my way across the room to that vacant place by Mrs. Southerland. She said something to me as I came in which I could not answer, because Miss Maitland was speaking to me at the same moment."

CHAPTER XXII.

I HAVE not done Mrs. Chilbert justice if I have so related facts as to convey the impression that she was a match-making lady, who took pleasure, even in the present early period of her existence, in exercising her skill in that line, as if to improve herself by a little practical experience before her own daughters required her assistance.

Mrs. Chilbert was no match-maker; she had never in her life felt the slightest propensity towards such an avocation, and though her conduct on the present occasion might fairly enough be considered as evincing an inclination to make an experiment of the kind, the feelings and motives which actuated her were special, and had nothing to do with her general character and conduct.

Every iota of the extravagant admiration expressed by Mrs. Chilbert for Judith was

genuine. Whether addressed to the young girl herself or to any other person, it mattered not; she uttered no word that her heart or her fancy did not fully confirm, and she only felt herself at a loss to find words sufficiently strong to express her feelings concerning her.

Though Mrs. Chilbert had married a gentleman who was very soon afterwards made a Dean, she had married very young, and though highly educated and highly intellectual too, she knew neither more nor less of human nature than any other young lady of eighteen. Moreover, she had the great disadvantage of feeling conscious that she was herself a vast deal more clever, more instructed, more intellectual than any other young lady that she knew.

Had she remained a year or two longer unmarried, she would have had a fair chance of knowing better, for her own connexions were people who lived a good deal in the world; but the society of Westhampton, though in point of well-ordered sobriety of demeanour perfectly deserving of all the fine things Miss Barbara Jenkyns said of it, was exactly of the quality and character most calculated to confirm the Dean's lady in all her notions concerning the low average of human capacity.

She really loved her husband, however, and he really deserved to be loved; but he too, like the great majority of his reverend brethren, was too well "content to live in decencies for ever," to be of any use in correcting her estimate.

Not once, therefore, had it ever happened to her in the whole course of her life to meet with anything bright, enthusiastic, and imaginative enough to satisfy her longing for what she sincerely believed to be the highest order of intellect. But in Judith Maitland she had found it all; and so much that was attractive and endearing besides in her loving temper, her graceful prettiness, her splendid voice, (not to mention her brilliant finger on the piano-forte,) that her affection and admiration immediately exceeded all reasonable bounds, and she felt as if the first duty of her life at the present moment was to cherish her, watch over her, and promote her happiness in every possible way.

It pained her maternal heart to think that so sweet a creature should be motherless; and the idea that this sensitive young creature should be so utterly alone, as she certainly was in the new world to which she had been sent, was positively dreadful to her.

This pitying feeling was doubtless rendered doubly acute by one peculiar weakness in Mrs. Chilbert's character. The horror of being *bored* (I know no other word to express this too common social annoyance) overstepped all reasonable bounds.

Doubtless it is lawful and perfectly natural that everybody should dislike the feeling of being bored, but in Mrs. Chilbert this feeling amounted to very positive agony; she would escape from it, and then weep from remembering what she had endured.

This was great folly, great weakness, and it would be difficult to find any reasonable excuse for it; but so it was, and, as it happened, the consequences of this folly and weakness became very advantageous to Judith Maitland.

Unfortunately for the Dean's lady there were a good many others among the individuals who formed the society of Westhampton who might also justly be classed under the generic appellation of bores, some dwelling in the Close and some out of it; but among them all there was not one who irritated her sensitive nerves so painfully as Miss Barbara Jenkyns.

One reason for this was that Miss Barbara unquestionably enjoyed a sufficient degree of popularity to bring her into all, or very nearly all, the evening parties given in the town, and the annoyance was, therefore, so often repeated as to become a very serious nuisance.

Moreover, Miss Barbara's principles led her, good lady, to take every possible opportunity of proving her devotion to Mrs. Dean, and this, of course, was done by never missing an opportunity of addressing and making long and very complimentary speeches to her, all compounded of reverence for herself and the church.

Had Miss Barbara herself presented her niece to Mrs. Chilbert, it is likely enough that she would have fixed her uncivil eyes here, there, and everywhere, rather than have looked at her. But Dr. Wroughtley was in some degree a favourite, and, to please him, she not only looked at the young stranger but spoke kindly to her. This was quite enough for both parties, and all that followed was inevitable.

But amidst the variety of feelings inspired by Judith, that of tender pity for being an inmate of Miss Barbara Jenkyns' was perhaps the deepest.

The idea haunted her; and though she had

too much good taste and right feeling to talk to Judith of the personal detestability of her aunt, she did not scruple to dilate upon the inevitable dulness of being domesticated where she could find no companionship.

Judith, too, was far from wishing to indulge in any disrespectful commentaries on the defects and deficiencies of her mother's sister; but as to denying the dulness of her present abode she did not attempt it, and if she had, she would not have succeeded for a moment; for Judith's breast was a very transparent one, and though she could not be said to wear her heart upon her sleeve for daws to peck at, inasmuch as daws were not the species of bird with which she sought association, yet certain it is that from those whom she made her companions by choice, she had little will and, perhaps, less power to disguise her feelings; so that, in fact, despite the reserve and propriety on both sides, Mrs. Chilbert had a tolerably correct idea of the degree of sympathy which existed between herself and her young friend on the subject of Miss Barbara, as well as concerning Shakspeare and Walter Scott.

"What on earth can I do for her?" thought the kind and pitying Mrs. Chilbert, as she sat idly with her book upon her knee, after Judith had left her to go home to an early dinner, on the very day of Miss Barbara's ball.

"It is too dreadful to think of, but I can positively do nothing! If I were a country clergyman's wife, and living in some pleasant village a dozen miles off, I might have her to stay with me, dear creature, for months together, till we had both of us almost learned to forget that there was any such thing as Miss Barbara existing. But this dignified Deanery is a perfect state prison to me, and I am afraid I shall begin to hate it."

And the next train of thought was in this wise.

"Early marriages, such very early marriages, are dangerous, especially to such a sensitive creature as this; yet it is the only hope for her, and even that is a most forlorn one. Who is she likely to see here, that I could endure to see her married to? One of the Watleys? Graceless scamps, with nothing but their good blood and handsome faces to recommend them! Or Sir James Green's cubbish heir? Forbid it, Heaven! Alas! alas! my poor dear Judith! It seems as if you had made your way to my heart wholly and solely to make it ache."

Is it extraordinary that to a lady in such a frame of mind the appearance upon the scene of such an individual as Mr. Frederic Dorking must have appeared like a god-send? Or can it be wondered at if she did permit herself to do and to say a few rather strange things, in order to profit by it?

However, I believe I have already recorded all that was most atrocious in her sayings and doings, for the purpose of bringing Mr. Frederic Dorking to the feet of Judith. Before she left the house of Miss Barbara that night, she had seen enough to convince her that, let her think Judith as beautiful, as bewitching, as fascinating as she might, Mr. Frederic Dorking would be perfectly ready to agree with her.

And then she endeavoured to remember what she had said, and to begin to wish that she had not said so much. Mr. Clayton, perhaps, might think she had some motive for it. Besides, it was now so very evident that it was all unnecessary. How could she have been such a fool? etc., etc., etc. However, it was all too late now, and she endeavoured to console herself by reflecting, that at any rate she had not gone the length of asking Mr. Clayton to bring him to the Deanery. "She should never have forgiven herself if she had!"

She had no cause, however, to repent any thing that she had said.

It had indeed all produced effect, but that effect was just what she wished it to be; and this was achieved without her having excited any suspicion of her object. For Judith really was very lovely; and Mrs. Clayton declared, as they went home, that she perfectly well remembered hearing Mr. Carey say that she was a ward in Chancery, and very rich; and as to all the rest, about the difficulty there would be in winning the pretty treasure, Mr. Clayton only repeated it as a joke, and as a proof that women, even such clever women as Mrs. Dean, knew nothing about their own sex, but he had no suspicion whatever that his fair clerical friend had any object in view, save that of amusing him.

The young man, however, heard it all, and one part of it, at least, was not without its effect. As to all that was repeated to him about her beauty and grace, he heeded it very little, for he felt himself so perfectly competent to form his own opinion thereupon, that he could not consider the opinion of Mr. Clayton, or of any one else, as a matter of much consequence.

But there was one sentence repeated that had been pronounced by Mr. Clayton, which did produce its intended effect. The heart of the lovely young stranger was supposed to be impregnable, and it was Mrs. Chilbert who had said so. Had any other in the room, either male or female, made the same assertion, it would have met no more attention from Mr. Dorking than if they had said that she was a very pretty young lady. But from the lips of Mrs. Chilbert it had more meaning, and more mischief.

Frederic Dorking had not been five minutes in Miss Barbara's ball-room, before his practised eye had selected the Dean's lady as the only woman there who "looked like somebody," and on hearing that she had been so obliging as to utter a note of warning lest he should be added to the unsuccessful list of Miss Maitland's adorers, a smile curled his handsome lip, and the thought passed across his mind that it was just possible she might be mistaken.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE last words spoken by Mrs. Chilbert to Judith as she left the ball-room were, "Come to me as early as possible to-morrow." And this command was pretty literally obeyed; for Judith slept as sound as a top till past nine in the morning, and then she had not only to perform her ablutions by the aid of her complicated and hard-to-manage bathing apparatus, and to make her toilet, but she had soberly and deliberately to eat her breakfast, face to face with Miss Barbara, afterwards; for although Dean Chilbert was one of the most good-humoured, amiable, and gentleman-like men in the world, Judith had no fancy for assisting at his breakfast-table, and discussing in his presence all the important events of the preceding evening. However, she did set off as soon as she thought it discreet to do so, as her aunt was fortunately too intent upon investigating the condition of her property, after the hurricane to which it had been exposed, even to listen to Judith's assurances that she thought the ball a very charming ball indeed.

Mrs. Chilbert's first look into the face of Judith had a great deal of meaning in it, though the little novice did not in the least suspect it.

She thought that her friend looked at her eyes so earnestly, to see how she bore dancing till three o'clock in the morning; and she answered the supposed inquiry by a laughing

assurance that she was not the least fatigued in the world.

"That's well, dearest! And it shows that your dear mother's scheme of keeping her nursery in the mountains answered; for were you as poor a thing, in point of health, as most Indian ladies, you could scarcely have looked as well as you do this morning. But tell me, love—let us come to our own sofa,—tell me, were you amused? Did you enjoy it?"

"Yes, I did, indeed," replied Judith, while a bright colour mounted to her cheeks. "I never enjoyed dancing so much before."

"So much depends upon one's partner," said Mrs. Chilbert. "I have seldom seen any one dance so well as that Mr. Dorking."

And then Judith found that there was something in the lacing of her boot that was not commodious, for she stooped down to alter it.

"You danced with him a good deal, dear; three or four times, did you not?"

"Yes, six times," was the reply; but the boot-lace was not right yet.

"Was he conversable, Judith? Do tell me something about him. In a country neighbourhood like this, I do assure you that it is by no means an every-day occurrence to meet such a personage as this Mr. Frederic Dorking.—Judith! if you keep on fiddling with that tiresome boot, I will ring for Walters to take it off, and bring you a pair of mine. You know we agreed the other day that, if we were twins, our feet could not be more alike."

Judith knew perfectly well that her cheeks were still dreadfully red. But people's cheeks always are red after stooping so long. Besides she began to think that it was no use, for that if Mrs. Chilbert would go on talking about Frederic Dorking, she must try to get used to it; so she looked up, and said, "No, don't take off my boots. It is all right now."

"Well then, my dear, perhaps you will tell me at last how you liked this six-times-over partner. Did you find him agreeable?"

"Yes. I think so."

"You think so! What a very strange answer. Don't you know, my dear child, whether you think people agreeable or not?"

"Oh yes," replied Judith, laughing. "There are many people that I think very disagreeable."

"And you are not quite sure that you class Mr. Frederic Dorking among them?" said Mrs. Chilbert.

"Yes, I am quite sure,—that is, I am quite sure that I do not," replied Judith, stoutly.

"I am glad to hear that," replied the Dean's lady, "because the Claytons are very old friends of ours; and, as this young man is staying there for the shooting season, it is very probable that we shall see more of him. But I do assure you I should discourage his coming, darling Judith, if I thought the meeting him would be a bore to you. You have so much to bore you, my poor child, elsewhere, that it would be absolute cruelty, when you run away in the hope of getting a little comfort from me and my piano, if I were to beguile you into making acquaintance with more bores."

"Oh dear, no! I don't mind at all!" replied Judith, looking considerably more like a fool than she ever did in her whole life before.

It was not without some difficulty that Mrs. Chilbert concealed her inclination to laugh. She felt it was time, however, to change the subject, and she did so by saying, "I want you to finish what you were saying to me a day or two ago, my dear Judith, about some uncle or aunt that you could not find. The Dean came in just as you were going to explain to me some difficulty that seemed to trouble you. What was it, dear?"

This question produced a very singular metamorphosis, not only in the countenance of Judith, but in her whole person, attitude, and bearing. Notwithstanding her pretty troubled look of confusion and embarrassment, there had been youthful joyousness in every lineament; her eye was sparkling with even more than its usual brightness, and it seemed as if her lips were only restrained from happy laughter by an effort; but no sooner had Mrs. Chilbert said these words than the bright eyes were filled with tears, and the lips trembling with emotion of a far different nature.

"Oh, Mrs. Chilbert!" she exclaimed, "what a wretch I am! What a heartless unnatural wretch I must be to have suffered the idea of this ball, and all the folly connected with it, to drive from my heart and my thoughts the only subject which ought really to occupy me!"

"My dear Judith, do not, I beseech you, blame yourself so very severely, merely because you have been kind enough to take some degree of interest in the pretty fête which has so pleasantly occupied us all. Come, come, dearest; there has not been

much time lost; and if you will tell me now what my good Dean prevented your telling me the other day, I will promise to give you my very best attention, and assistance too, sweet love, should assistance be wanted."

"Thank you! thank you! my dear kind friend,—a thousand times thank you!" cried Judith. "I do, indeed, want assistance; and you, who seem to know everything, will know how to give it to me. But can you, and will you, listen with patience to a long and dismal story?"

"I can and I will, if it relates in any way to you, my Judith," replied Mrs. Chilbert, in a voice as cordially kind as were the words themselves.

"Oh! yes, it does indeed relate to me, and all that is dearest to me," returned Judith. And then she related the whole story of her aunt Penelope's marriage, from the falling in love with the amiable and accomplished young drawing-master, to the desolate condition in which his widow and son were left at his death.

"Unfortunately," continued Judith, "my aunt's marriage was achieved by means of an elopement, and therefore, of course, her fortune was not settled upon her; and I believe, though I do not know any of the particulars, that my uncle Worthington, clever as he was, never got much money by his profession, and, therefore, that when he died, most of poor aunt Penelope's money was gone. But this at least I know perfectly well, for I have heard mamma say it a hundred times over, that he was always kindness itself to his wife, and that his death was the first tidings that ever reached her from aunt Penelope that ever seemed otherwise than happy and contented. And I know, too, my dearest Mrs. Chilbert, that though mamma always spoke kindly of all her sisters, aunt Penelope was the only one she ever really loved; and they did love each other most affectionately, that is quite certain."

"Then why, my dearest child," said Mrs. Chilbert, suddenly interrupting her, "why did your mother confide you to the personal care of such a—forgive me, dearest Judith—how came it that you were not left in the care of her best-beloved sister?"

"Because, by a most unlucky chance," replied Judith, "my poor mother knew not where my aunt Penelope was to be found. A week or two after my father died, a letter came from aunt Worthington, who was then still at Rome, where she had been living near-

ly ever since her marriage, saying that it was the last that she should write from thence, for that her son Charles (her only child) was anxious to try his fortune as an artist, either in France or England. His father, it seems, had never, with all his talent, made much profit by it at Rome; and my poor aunt confessed that she was glad of any excuse for leaving a place where she had been too happy in days past to hope that she could ever feel happy there in future. The letter concluded by saying that as soon as they had made their decision between Paris and London, she would write again. But, alas! my own dear mother had ceased to exist before that promised letter came, and, therefore, it was impossible for her to consign me to a relation of whose residence she was completely ignorant. But though she could not send me to her, the very latest moments of her life were spent in making me understand how dearly she loved her, and in charging me to do all that I had the power of doing—now and always—to assist both her and my cousin Charles; for she greatly seemed to fear that they might want it. Moreover, and this at the present moment is the most important of all, she placed in my hands a casket of diamonds, which I believe are worth a great deal of money, with directions to give it to her with my own hands as soon as I found it possible.

"Of course I thought," continued poor Judith, with a face glowing with indignation, "of course I thought that my two English aunts would be able at once to tell me where I might direct a letter to aunt Penelope. But no!—they knew nothing at all about her! It was years, they said, since they had heard anything of her, and she and her son might both be gone to the moon for anything they knew or cared."

This recurrence to her first great European disappointment, and to the source of the (it must be confessed) rather vehement dislike which she had conceived against her aunt Barbara, at once drove everything else from her mind. Mr. Frederic Dorking, his undisguised though most respectful admiration, the pleasure of sincerely believing herself one of the most highly-gifted and captivating young ladies in existence, nay, even the delightful persuasion that the fascinating and accomplished lady of the Dean of Westhampton had never till now met with any of her own sex worthy of her affection, all was forgotten, and Judith burst into a passion of

tears, as youthful and as genuine as ever were shed.

“Horrid, unnatural, old wretch!” exclaimed Mrs. Chilbert, unconsciously, perhaps availing herself of Judith’s strong emotion to indulge in the avowal of a dislike which, on all ordinary occasions, she considered it decorous to conceal.

“But do not let her barbarity break your heart, my sweet Judith. Her paltry plotting shall be of no avail; we will find this dear aunt Penelope, in spite of her.”

At that moment our poor half-spoiled Judith was all herself again; and when, springing up and throwing her arms round her friend, she kissed her again and again, it was with a feeling as unmixed with any of the pernicious little vanities which had half smothered by their overgrown gratitude the affection she had hitherto felt for her, as if it had been her own longed-for aunt Penelope that she embraced.

“But why, my dear, when this—but we won’t call names, Judith—why, when Miss Barbara Jenkyns gave you this unfeeling answer, why did you not write to the other—to the Miss Elfreda, who lives in London? She is rather a quizzical sort of a personage, too, I believe, being tremendously blue in the scientific line, but that is no reason, you know, why she should be as unnatural as the old maid here. Why do you not write to her?”

“I have done so,” replied Judith; “I did it as soon as I was sufficiently recovered from the half-distracted feeling which aunt Barbara’s way of mentioning my uncle Worthington threw me into. But, excepting that her letter contained no base insinuations against him, whom I believe to have been one of the most amiable men that ever existed—excepting for this, her answer was as dreadful as that of my aunt Barbara. She knew nothing about her sister Worthington, excepting that she was a widow, with one child, who must, by this time, of course, be a grown-up man, as it was more than three-and-twenty years since her terrible elopement, and they had heard of the birth of her child a year afterwards.”

“And this was all?” said Mrs. Chilbert; “nothing whatever as to Mrs. Worthington’s having left Rome?”

“Not a word,” returned Judith, with a fresh burst of tears; “and thus I am left, not only without the power of gratifying my natural wish of seeing the only relative whom I was really prepared to love, but with the bur-

den on my heart and conscience of not fulfilling my dying mother’s last command. Do you not hate me, Mrs. Chilbert, for being able to forget all this, even for an hour?”

“On the contrary, my dear; I should love you much less if it were otherwise,” replied her friend; “for, in the first place, such a useless devotion of your thoughts to any subject would be very silly, and, what I should feel as worse still, it would be very unnatural. No, dearest Judith, there can be no possible benefit derived in any way from your thinking all day or dreaming all night of your aunt Barbara’s detestabilities, one of the worst of which, I am quite willing to allow, is the throwing off such a sister as your poor mother described Mrs. Worthington to be, for no other reason than that she had not taken such good care of her shillings and sixpences as her tiresome self. It is an abominable trait in both these virgin Jenkynses. There is no denying it, Judith. But I will not have you look so dreadfully miserable, my child. Mercy on me! what would the graceful Frederic think, if he happened to come to Westhampton this morning, in the hope of seeing the *beaux yeux* he so prodigiously admired last night? He would find them drowned, my naughty Judith; absolutely put out and extinguished. You would not quite wish that, would you?”

But this appeal did not produce the effect that was kindly intended. Judith was painfully conscious that for some time past she had thought less of her aunt Worthington and more of Mrs. Chilbert, and of her own little self, perhaps, into the bargain, than she would have believed possible a week or two ago, and this mention of her last night’s elegant partner, who, except while she slept, had never been quite out of her head for a single moment since he had passed from her sight through the door of Miss Barbara’s drawing-room—this sudden mention of him, just when she had sufficiently recovered from the impression he had made, to permit her to think of something else, was positively painful to her.

“Don’t! don’t, dearest Mrs. Chilbert; oh! pray don’t try to make me think of anything, or of any body, till I have done all that I ought to do about aunt Penelope,” she exclaimed, with great and genuine earnestness. “You cannot guess, perhaps, how truly I despise myself for having been able so nearly to forget all about her and my cousin Charles, as I have lately done. Have I not shown rather

a strong family resemblance to my two maiden aunts?"

There was a bitterness of self-reproach in her tone as she said this, that fully proved its sincerity; and Mrs. Chilbert certainly loved her the better for it, though it vexed her.

"No, no, no!" she replied; "ten thousand times no! and I will prove it to you, Judith. You are angry with yourself because you have loved me, and, as that is what they never did, you cannot be very much like them. But do not let us talk any more nonsense about it. I pity your vexation heartily, for I can perfectly well understand what you must feel from being thus robbed of the first duty and the first pleasure you had promised yourself, as the best consolation for being sent into a world of strangers. It is cruelly hard upon you, and upon poor Mrs. Worthington also, for you might be a comfort to her in many ways. But I can see nothing but folly in your blaming yourself for it. And now, dear, let us see whether I may not have the power of helping you. Have you taken any steps yourself, Judith?"

"I have written to Madras, to the friend who has transacted all mamma's business for her since the death of my father, and have begged him to take every possible means of learning the address to which my mother directed her letters at Rome. For myself, I cannot recollect having ever seen one of these letters when the address was written upon them, though I have very often seen her occupied in writing to my aunt Penelope; and, most unfortunately, she made a general burning of all old letters one of her preparations for leaving India. But even if I had got my aunt's address at Rome, it is still very likely that I might be unable to find her, for we know that it is her address no longer. And you, my dear kind friend, how is it possible that you can help me?" said poor Judith, mournfully.

"I certainly think it is possible, though perhaps not very likely, Judith," replied Mrs. Chilbert. "One of my sisters is just gone to Rome with the intention of passing the whole winter there. She will be sure to know everybody, and if you will write for me not only the name but every particular you can think of respecting your aunt and cousin, I will lay my commands on her, and she will be sure to obey them, not to omit any possible means of discovering where they are gone."

"There is indeed hope in that, my most

kind friend!" cried Judith, fervently. "Oh! how can I ever thank you enough!"

"You shall not thank me at all, darling. But if you really mean to give me a reward," said Mrs. Chilbert, "you shall promise never to let me see you again looking so deplorably wretched as you have done this morning, ever since the name of aunt Worthington was mentioned."

"I will try in everything to do exactly as you would have me," replied Judith, joyfully; "and the first thing shall be to write what you have asked for."

"What now, dearest? Shall we not have a little bit of gossip about the ball first?"

Judith had seized upon a pen, but she laid it down again. "Just as you please, dearest Mrs. Chilbert," said she, evidently making an effort to look cheerful and amused.

"No, Judith! no; that will not do. I have sometimes thought that you would make a charming actress, but you must take a few lessons first; and, above all things, I think it will be necessary not to talk about our aunt Penelope when we are going to set about it. Here, my dear; and take care to be as clear and precise as possible;" and Mrs. Chilbert replaced the pen in Judith's hand as she spoke.

Judith seized the kind hand and kissed it; and then, opening the blotting-book and selecting a moderately-sized bit of paper, she meditated for one moment, and then wrote as follows:

"Mrs. Worthington, widow of Mr. Charles Worthington, an English artist, who had lived in Rome for many years before his death, which happened about two years ago. Mrs. Worthington has one son, of one or two and twenty years of age, who has been brought up to the same profession as his father."

Having written this, she put it into the hand of her friend, saying, "Do not think me encroaching. Do not fancy that I want you to write this very minute, whether it be convenient or not. But, dearest Mrs. Chilbert! let me leave you now, for I have cried till I have made my head ache, and I am fit for nothing but to go home and lie down upon the bed."

Mrs. Chilbert looked at her very affectionately, and then said, after giving her a loving kiss, "Go, my dear child! You are quite right, Judith. I dare say I shall have morning visitors, and I must confess that you are not fit to be seen. You are a good little girl not to insist upon my writing letters, after

being up nearly all night watching your waltzes and polkas; and I will take no unfair advantage of your indulgence. Good-bye!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

As soon as Judith had left the room, Mrs. Chilbert took up the paper she had written and read it, half aloud. "Widow of Mr. Charles Worthington, English artist, and the son brought up in the same profession," she repeated. "Darling little angel!" I will keep my promise to her, and find out the aunt Worthington and the artist son if I can. But Heaven grant that I may find them snugly settled, and painting pictures to their hearts' content, somewhere quite beyond the search of my sweet Judith! The diamonds shall be safely forwarded, if these artistic folks are within reach of a royal messenger; but Judith must not be forwarded after them. She is a jewel richer than all the rest, and it shall not be my fault if a fitting setting be not found for her. Mercy on us! The widow and the son of a painter that no mortal ear has ever heard of! If odious Miss Barbara's motive were as good as mine, she might almost be forgiven for burying one sister in oblivion for the sake of the precious treasure consigned to her care by another."

And then the Dean's lady mused and mused, and meditated long and deeply on all the different tricks she had read of, heard of, and seen too, when she had turned an idle eye that way, by which a young gentleman and a young lady, who thought each other "very nice persons indeed," might be made to believe that it was impossible they could live without each other.

Practically she knew very little about it; for though she was a charming young woman, and her husband a reverend Dean, no trickery of any kind had been used to bring them together. But her mother-wit, unaided as it was by experience, taught her to believe that in a case where mutual liking was already so very evident, the simple process of bringing them as often as possible into the same society was very likely to answer, and might save the necessity of any more complicated manœuvring.

Mrs. Chilbert knew that Judith Maitland was very young, but gave her credit for being at least a year older than she was; for Judith, being a good deal ashamed of her juvenility, always carefully avoided the subject, and although her sixteenth birthday had occurred within the last few months, nobody had heard

anything about it, for Miss Barbara was quite ignorant of the fact, having always rather disliked discussing any of the details appertaining to the arrival of her nepotine connections in this vale of tears, and Judith herself thinking it very childish and silly to talk about birthdays.

And thus the Dean's lady was a little less blameable than she would have been had she known that the gay little creature, whom she was so eager to convert into a matron, was younger than many English young ladies who are still under the dominion of a governess.

Having said thus much in her defence, the veracity of an historian obliges me to confess that within ten minutes after Judith left her Mrs. Chilbert was on her way towards the Dean's library, where she was tolerably certain of finding him reading the newspaper.

Is there any sin in a woman's obtaining great influence over her husband, and using it? God forbid! for, if there be, the great majority of the most amiable portion of the most amiable sex are unquestionably sinners.

Certain is it, however, that Mrs. Chilbert would rather have thrust her pretty little hand into the fire, than have used this influence in any way that could leave regret, or any cause for it, on the mind of her husband.

But her life (as that of all other happy wives) would have been far less agreeable than it was, had she not felt the soft, soothing, gentle, loving consciousness, that her lord and her master would be as sure to let her lead him in the way she wished him to go, as she was that she would never lead him in any direction wherein he might repent having followed her!

It was, therefore, with a light confident sort of step that Mrs. Dean now approached her very reverend spouse and imparted to him her wish, though not its motive, that they should have a dinner party the beginning of the following week, and that the Claytons and Mr. Dorking should be invited."

"Very well, Annie, I have no sort of objection," replied the Dean. "I presume, my dear, that you have fallen in love with their handsome young guest?"

"Exactly so," she replied, "and therefore you must not have a very large stiff party, please, Mr. Dean, not more than eight, or at the most ten, at table, and enough for your rubber in the evening. Should you have any objection to my asking the Saunders' for the evening?"

"The Saunders', Annie?" said the Dean, staring at her with extreme astonishment. "Why, my dear child, the Claytons never approach the Close without being sure of meeting whatever is considered as the most dignified amongst us. I will venture to say, that they never met either Saunders or any of his race in their lives. What will they think of seeing such a group in your drawing-room, Mrs. Dean?"

"Are you a man to stand in awe of any Mrs. Grundy in the world?" replied his wife, shaking an admonitory finger at him. "No, my 'digne Dean!'—not if Clayton Hall were Windsor Castle. Besides, I don't mean to have a group; you can't have a group, you know, with less than three, and I only ask the *entrée* for two. Only Miss Sophy and her papa."

"Then your new love is a nightingale, Annie, is he?"

"Very likely, I think," she replied. "He looks as if he had all the accomplishments that ever endowed mortal man; but, concerning his musical powers, I have not made any enquiries as yet. You give me *carte blanche*, then?"

"Yes, Annie," was the amiable reply. "Only contrive to get Saunders scoured if you can."

Mrs. Chilbert, in short, found no difficulties in the way of her schemes in the library, neither did she anticipate any; but nevertheless, after the Dean's *carte blanche* was given, she was a little puzzled how to get on.

Of course Judith Maitland must meet the Clayton Hall party at dinner; but what was to be done with the aunt Barbara? Was she to make one of the chosen ten? The mere thought, though accompanied rather than followed by the vehemently uttered word "impossible!" brought a rush of blood to her delicate face, and made her actually feel very poorly. The adamant decision that Miss Barbara was to be left at home, *coûte qui coûte*, sustained her courage, however, and gave strength to meditate sagely and soberly upon the best way of performing a difficult task, no less difficult than doing a very rude thing civilly.

She meditated for several minutes, however, without getting on an inch; and then a ray of light shot through her puzzled brain, which caused her rather to dance than to walk towards the bell, which she rang vigorously.

"Go to Dr. Wroughtley's, James," said

the lady to the servant who answered the summons; "ask to see him, and tell him, with my compliments, that I shall be much obliged to him if he will call upon me this morning, as early as he can."

The Doctor's house was very near the Deanery, the message was promptly delivered, and promptly attended to, and Mrs. Chilbert and Dr. Wroughtley were *tête-à-tête*.

"This is very kind of you, dear Doctor Wroughtley," she began; "but I am afraid that you will feel disposed to lament your good-nature to me when I tell you, that I have sent for you in order that you might assist me in doing an exceedingly rude thing."

"The occupation will at least have novelty to recommend it," replied the Doctor.

"Why, yes, as far as consulting you about it," replied Mrs. Chilbert, laughing, "for I don't remember ever feeling in want of assistance upon such an occasion before—but this time, the thing I want to do is perfectly atrocious, it is, upon my honour, and——"

"And for that reason you have selected me to help you," returned Dr. Wroughtley, laughing.

"Exactly so!" returned Mrs. Chilbert. And then she went on, and confessed to him that at the very small dinner party they were going to give the Claytons, they were about equally anxious to have that pretty and quite new little creature Judith Maitland, and not to have her aunt Barbara."

A person of less tact than Mrs. Chilbert would have feared that offence might be given to Dr. Wroughtley by talking to him of a dinner party, to which he was not invited. But she knew better. She thought that he would be more flattered by being summoned in consultation, than affronted at not being invited to meet the party from Clayton Hall; and so he was.

"Have you already said anything about this dinner party to the little Judith?" said he.

"Not a word," she replied.

"Very well; then I can manage the matter for you perfectly well. Sit down, my dear Mrs. Dean, if you please, and pen an invitation to Miss Barbara and her niece Judith for dinner on the day in question."

"What can you mean, Dr. Wroughtley?" said the lady, looking greatly astonished, and not at all amused.

"May I trust you?" was his reply. "If I put you in the way of doing exactly every-

thing you wish to do, will you promise never to tell that it was I who told you how it might be done?"

"Yes; I do promise it," said Mrs. Chilbert.

"Well, then, Mrs. Dean, if you will write an invitation to Miss Barbara Jenkyns, I will write one too; that is to say, I will invite myself to eat some game that I will send to her, and I will bet my shovel hat to your worst bonnet that she refuses your invitation."

"And accepts yours," returned Mrs. Chilbert, laughing.

"Yes, provided you allow time for my note to reach her before yours does," said Doctor Wroughtley.

"But will there be no danger, think you, that she may throw herself upon your generous friendship, and ask you to release her for my dinner, fixing the day after for yours?"

"No, I do not," replied Dr. Wroughtley.

"But how will that bring me Judith? I really must have Judith, Dr. Wroughtley."

"I think that may be managed too," said the Senior Prebend, demurely.

"Well, my dear Doctor, you seem to be so confident of success, that you make me confident too," said Mrs. Chilbert. "But do not you think," she added, "that it would facilitate matters if we were to arrange that you should have your rubber here?"

"I think it might, Mrs. Dean; and that may be very easily negotiated by means of my calling upon you, and conveying to Miss Barbara a message to that effect," replied the Doctor.

"Now then, go home and dispatch your note, and in two hours from this time," said the lady, pointing to the time-piece on the chimney, "I will dispatch mine."

The plot was carried out with great exactitude, and with perfect success; but Doctor Wroughtley would scarcely have been so active and willing an agent in it, could he have guessed at the emotions to which the arrangement gave birth.

It may be easily believed that Miss Barbara was thrown into a very delightful flutter of spirits by the arrival of the friendly little epistle by which "her friend" invited himself to dine with her; the only drawback to the happiness it produced arising from the embarrassing doubts and fears which suggested themselves concerning what she should be able to do about getting Judith out of the room for a short—oh! a very short time

would be enough; and that before the people whom she must of course invite for his rubber should arrive.

This tremendous difficulty was still tormenting her when the invitation from the Deanery arrived. The time had been when a dinner invitation from the Deanery would have been welcomed with great delight—and it was welcomed with delight now—the exceeding delight of feeling that a happiness so great awaited her for that day, that the thing which would have been prized, and dearly prized, before, was now as worthless as an autumn leaf falling at her feet.

Her answer to the note of Dr. Wroughtley had been long ago dispatched; and now, with pleasant pride at thinking how much she had to do in the article of note-writing, she began her epistle to Mrs. Chilbert; but just as she was in the very act of writing "Miss Jenkyns regrets extremely——" the house-bell rang, and in the next moment Dr. Wroughtley was ushered into her study.

It was with rather a tender smile that she ceased writing, and put Mrs. Chilbert's invitation into his hand.

"Oh dear, how unlucky!" exclaimed the Doctor. "It is the very day that I was to have dined with you!"

"Was to have dined with me, Doctor Wroughtley? What difference do you suppose this will make? Do you really believe that I would give up that engagement for any other?" said she, reproachfully.

"My dear Miss Barbara, you are very kind, very kind indeed! Always kind, and always friendly! But think what a disappointment it will be to your niece. Oh, no! I really cannot think of it. You must accept this invitation, Miss Barbara—you must indeed!"

"Indeed, then, Dr. Wroughtley, I will not," said she; "so do not say any more about it, or I shall consider it extremely unkind."

"Don't say that, Miss Barbara; I would not be thought unkind by you for the world! Neither would I be unkind to your pretty young lady," said the Doctor, musingly. "Let us see—let us consider a little. If we could manage, now, for her to dine at the Deanery, while you indulge your old friend with one of your snug little dinners at home, it would be all right, and nothing wrong—would it not?"

"It would be perfect!" exclaimed Miss Barbara, endeavouring to restrain her emotions within the bounds of discretion; "it really would be quite perfect, Dr. Wroughtley; for, wishing as earnestly as we do, you

know"—Miss Barbara felt herself fully justified in following the example of her friend in thus adopting the plural pronoun—"that this dear child should be happy, and enjoy herself, it really would be a pity to prevent her dining at the Deanery; but how can we manage it?"

The Senior Prebend, double sided conspirator as he was, appeared for a moment to be plunged in deep reflection, and then, suddenly rising from his chair, he said, "Trust the matter to me, Miss Barbara, and if I do not manage it to your liking, never give me a commission again. I will be back again in ten minutes." And, so saying, he seized upon his shovel-hat, and disappeared.

It is needless to attempt describing the emotions of Miss Barbara Jenkyns after Doctor Wroughtley left her. Let it only be remembered that he was gone for the express purpose of arranging matters so as to enjoy a long *tête-à-tête* with herself, and the very dullest imagination may be able to paint the rest.

Neither is it necessary to repeat what passed between the nuncio doctor and the dean's lady, for enough has been said already to make what followed sufficiently clear and sufficiently sure.

In a word, then, Dr. Wroughtley returned to his beaming, blooming, and thrice-happy friend, with a separate invitation to dinner for Judith, and an earnest request that Miss Barbara would bring the friendly messenger to play a rubber at the Deanery in the evening.

"Bring him!" was repeated, almost audibly, in the ecstasy of that delicious moment; but the good doctor did not hear it, and most assuredly he did not guess it; for it is but justice to that worthy gentleman to declare, that he was as free from all suspicion of the wild work that was going on in the bosom of Miss Barbara, as the parrot who was muttering "darling" on his perch.

CHAPTER XXV.

MRS. CHILBERT was not without hope that, before her invitation could reach Clayton Hall, she should hear or see something of her new acquaintance, Mr. Frederic Dorking. Nor was she disappointed; for scarcely had her second confidential interview with Doctor Wroughtley ended when that very graceful personage was announced.

After a few minutes of such talk as was likely to take place under the circumstances, rendered, perhaps, a little more animated by

the very decided wish to become better acquainted which existed on both sides, Mrs. Chilbert said, "We have just dispatched a note to the Hall, Mr. Dorking, to ask Mr. and Mrs. Clayton to dine with us on Tuesday, and to express our hope that, if you have not left the country, you will do the Dean and myself the honour of coming with them."

"You are very kind, Mrs. Chilbert, I shall have great pleasure in waiting on you. As to leaving the country, I assure you I have no thoughts of it. The Claytons are very dear friends of mine. I saw a great deal of them abroad, and, when we parted at Rome last year, Clayton made me promise to kill no birds but on his manor this. So I have installed myself for an age."

And then they talked a little about the ball, and a little more about the fine old cathedral, and more still about the neighbourhood; and then the bell was rung, and an intimation was dispatched to the Dean that Mr. Dorking was in the drawing-room.

But neither the lady nor the gentleman said a word about Judith, though it is likely enough that she was in the thoughts of both the whole time.

When Mr. Dean made his appearance, however, the conversation again reverted for a few minutes to the ball; and the very reverend gentleman, knowing no reason to the contrary, immediately began talking of her as *la belle par excellence*, adding moreover, but perfectly guiltless the while of any motive whatever, save that of finding something to talk about, that she was very lovely.

Mrs. Chilbert had been rather pleased than the contrary, by the cautious manner in which the young man had avoided all allusion to Judith. It looked very like being afraid to mention her; but far more decided was her satisfaction on perceiving the colour in her handsome visitor's cheek to be augmented by hearing her named. And then her dear Dean, exactly as if her secret wishes had actually inspired him, added, in a sort of friendly gossiping tone, "The young lady is likely to be a person of consequence among us, I suspect, for she is just arrived from India with a large fortune."

"Indeed," replied Mr. Frederic Dorking, in an accent of the most accomplished dandy indifference.

But the Dean's lady was in no degree discouraged thereby, for she was not insensible to the fact that he availed himself of the assistance of a "Book of Beauty," which lay

upon the table, even as he made this laconic answer.

"The shaft has hit," murmured the observant lady, as her husband accompanied their elegant new acquaintance down the stairs; and the observant lady was right.

Nothing could be more successful in every way than this dinner party at the Deanery; Mr. Dorking took Miss Maitland down to dinner, and assuredly did not permit this excellent opportunity of improving his acquaintance with her to be lost. Perhaps the process that had been going on for the last few weeks in Judith's mind, under the influence of Mrs. Chilbert's affectionate flattery, was on this occasion rather advantageous to the young lady than the contrary, for it went far towards saving her from that painfully embarrassing feeling of shyness, which often makes a young girl, notwithstanding all the charm of that *beauté du diable* which is generally found so enchanting, but a wearisome sort of neighbour at the dinner-table. But it was not so now.

Frederic Dorking had been very decidedly "smitten" both by the beauty and elegance of Judith's appearance at her aunt's ball; he thought her then by far the loveliest girl he had ever seen, and, before this dinner was over, he was fully prepared to assert that she was as much superior to all others in intelligence as she was in beauty.

It often happens, however, that admiration as sincere as that felt by Mr. Dorking for Judith Maitland is doomed to pass away, and, if not absolutely forgotten, to produce no result more important than the recollection of the fair creature's name, or, perhaps, a notion that some face in a book of beauty, or a picture-gallery, was very like one he remembered, etc., etc., etc. But Mr. Frederic Dorking was in a position not quite so common among admiring young gentlemen, as pretty young ladies may wish it was. Not only was he rich enough to marry, whenever the wish to do so came upon him, but he was so completely his own master as to be conscious that he had no one's wishes, or will, to consult in this matter, but his own.

Moreover, Frederic Dorking considered it to be quite as necessary that a man should have a wife, as that he should have a carriage, or a stud, or a conservatory, or any other of the luxuries and comforts which men of fortune usually enjoy.

So far, indeed, was he from feeling any lingering partiality for the gay freedom of his

bachelor condition, that he had for the last year or two felt inclined to lament his own fastidiousness, and almost regretted that he had amused himself so idly in rambling through all the capitals of Europe, dancing and flirting with successive charmers without ever permitting himself to think seriously of any.

The strongest proof that such days were gone and over for him might have been found in the thought which passed his mind, as he resumed his seat after the ladies had left the dinner-table, and which may be thus rendered into words: "Thank Heaven that I never so mistook myself as to fancy that I loved before!"

Mrs. Chilbert, while chatting charmingly, and with even more than her usual grace and animation, with Mr. Clayton on one side, and Dr. Stephenson, the last new Prebend, on the other, was very far from being insensible to what was going on a little lower down the table. She saw the delicate cheek of Judith become deeper and deeper in its lovely bloom; she saw Dorking wave away dish after dish as they were offered to him, while, on the slightest attempt to draw off his attention for a single moment from the companion on his right hand, an involuntarily sort of frown seemed to contract his eyebrows, which only relaxed when he found himself at liberty to turn towards her again.

An ordinary looker-on, however, would have been very far from comprehending, as Mrs. Chilbert comprehended, what was going on.

She was, indeed, beginning to know Judith very well, and her rising colour, and an occasional flash which she caught from her eye, as from time to time she looked up into the face of Mr. Dorking, convinced her that her very heart and soul was interested in the discussion that was going on; and, from words caught in the deep clear voice of the young man, it soon became evident that he was replying to her questions respecting the great *chefs-d'œuvre* of art which he had seen at Rome. It was a theme upon which Mrs. Chilbert knew that Judith felt great interest, and was very likely to express herself with an energy and enthusiasm which could scarcely fail to be interesting. And that Frederic Dorking found it so, was very sufficiently clear also.

And then the Dean's lady looked the other way, perfectly well satisfied with what was going on at present, but fully determined, nevertheless, that the heart of the doomed

young man should be attached more powerfully still, as soon as the Saunders pair arrived and the piano-forte was opened.

Meanwhile, however, she was very indulgent, and sat very much longer at the dinner-table than was her usual custom; nor was it till she had three times caught the eye of Mrs. Clayton very speakingly fixed upon her, and seeming to say, as loudly as a look could speak, "Do you ever mean to go?" that she at length got up, and led the ladies to the drawing-room.

She found that Mr. Saunders and his daughter were already arrived, and, had her melodious minor canon been a little less queer, and more gentleman-like in his appearance, she would have desired him to join the gentlemen, in order to indulge him with a glass of claret; but at that moment it was not merely the first but literally the only object of Mrs. Chilbert's existence to do nothing that might jar in any way against the delicate feelings of her elegant new acquaintance.

Sending dirty Mr. Saunders to sit near him, or in sight of him, particularly at a moment when the cruel removal of Judith from his side must have sorely tried his temper, might, she thought, at once awaken him to a very dangerous consciousness that a rather obscure country town, even though there was a cathedral in it, was not the scene where a man of fashion ought to look for a wife.

But the success of Mrs. Chilbert's first match-making attempt was already vastly greater than she had herself any idea of. She might safely have presented all the singing men belonging to the church in succession to Mr. Dorking, without his wishes, his hopes, or his intentions being in the very least degree affected thereby.

Had she been aware of this, sweet lady, she would have been spared a vast deal of very needless trouble that evening; for being quite aware that it was no easy thing to make a stout blousy-looking young maiden, in a sky-blue muslin dress with a red sash, look like a gentlewoman, or her very rusty-coated elderly papa, with his side pockets hanging hopelessly open, and his dappled hair as rough as the mane of a Scotch pony, look like a gentleman, her anxiety as to the result of the bold measure she had taken in admitting them was very great.

Yet, even while she looked at them and then at Judith, and remembered the effect,

the deliciously entrancing effect, of her touching voice in the trio that she meant should be performed that evening, as a sort of finishing *coup de grace* that was to put an end to any lingering doubts in the mind of Mr. Dorking as to the impossibility of living without the angelic creature she intended thus to exhibit to him, even as she looked, and saw all the alarming abominations of this minor canonical exhibition, she could not repent what she had done.

In the young Judith herself, moreover, she had the supreme satisfaction of perceiving precisely every symptom that she wished to see. The animated flush had faded from her cheek, her eyes seemed to be made of lead, and to possess no power of raising themselves from the carpet. Her memory was evidently impaired, for when Miss Sophia Saunders, with the familiarity naturally consequent upon their frequent recent meetings, made some jocose allusion to something that had been said or done between them, she started as if the being spoken to was the most alarming thing in the world; and then, instead of answering rationally, stared in the puzzled Miss Sophia's face as if she had never beheld her before.

Had the hopeful but anxious Mrs. Chilbert felt any doubts as to the cause of all these strange phenomena, they would all have been removed when the drawing-room door opened, and Mr. Frederic Dorking entered.

It was not the habit of the Dean to sit long after dinner; but this, like everything else at the Deanery, was regulated with the very strictest good taste and propriety, and it was certainly not his habit to repair to the drawing-room with such promptitude as his new acquaintance exhibited upon this occasion.

There was, indeed, so very short an interval between the departure of the ladies and his following them, that his friend Mr. Clayton thought it necessary to utter something by way of apology, which he did by observing that Dorking had been living so much abroad as to have acquired the continental habit of leaving the dining-room with the ladies; "but we must try to break him of it, Mr. Dean," said he, "for I am not sure that English ladies will like it."

CHAPTER XXVI.

MRS. CHILBERT contrived on that evening, as indeed she generally did, to arrange the affairs of her drawing-room exactly as she intended they should be arranged.

She had two card-tables, with precisely the party she had decided upon at each; and this being all "done, settled" with a fixedness not likely to be easily interrupted, Mrs. Chilbert passed her arm under that of Judith, gave an intelligent look and nod to Mr. Saunders, and saying in a tone that was friendly and flattering, "Now we will give you a song, Mr. Dorking," led the way through the folding-doors to the piano-forte, leaving it, as she always did, to the choice of the prebendal ladies whose husbands were engaged at whist to watch their fate with conjugal anxiety, or to follow her to the piano-forte.

It is not very easy for the person who presides at the piano, during a performance that demands a careful accompaniment, to watch very accurately the effect of that performance on any particular auditor. But Mrs. Chilbert was very clever, and she did contrive to watch Mr. Frederic Dorking, and that, too, without injuring the beautiful accuracy of her own share of the business.

The position of her piano-forte favoured this; and if any eye could have read all the ardour of admiration which filled that young gentleman's soul, hers would have done it.

And, in truth, she did read quite enough to satisfy her that his condition as a fancy-free man was hopeless.

His eyes, which were by no means wanting in tender expression, were fixed upon the face of Judith as if his life hung upon his power of looking at her. It certainly did not require the acumen of a Mrs. Chilbert to discover that the gentleman was a lover, and a very impassioned lover; but not even her skill in the study of the "human face divine" enabled her to satisfy herself upon one point: was it the thrilling quality of Judith's voice, the deep fervour of her manner, the perfection of truth in every note, that caused him thus to gaze as if his very being was merged in hers, or was it only that he was enamoured of her beauty?

She could not tell, and she was vexed with herself as she felt conscious that her usually unflinching tact in such researches had failed her now.

Before a second song was ended, however, she came to the conclusion that it did not signify a farthing. It was folly to suppose that any man, especially one who could scarcely fail to have had a taste for the fine arts developed and cultivated by such opportunities of education and travel as Mr. Dorking had enjoyed, could be insensible to the

exquisite and very peculiar charm of Judith's performance. At any rate, that he was profoundly touched, nay, already passionately in love, could no longer be doubted, and it mattered little why or how it had happened that he was so, provided only that the fact was satisfactorily established.

On this point Mrs. Chilbert had little doubt when her party on that day broke up, and she saw the look with which the young man stood contemplating the lovely girl while waiting to hand her to the carriage; she felt, too, the trembling emotion of Judith, when she embraced and bade her farewell.

"Sweet creature!" murmured this affectionate friend, as, really exhausted by the agitating interest of the day, she sought her own room the very moment that the last of her guests had departed. "Sweet creature! Heaven grant that she may ever remember this day with pleasure! He really does seem everything one could desire for her; and, at any rate, such a marriage as this must be preferable to wearing away her youth in the society of such a thing as Miss Barbara. Mercy on us! how grim the tiresome creature looked to-night."

And certainly Miss Barbara did look rather grim; and we all know that she would not have looked grim at all, had the puzzling Prebend put to profit the precious *tête-à-tête* which he had so cleverly arranged.

But he had only eaten a very good dinner, looked very well pleased and contented, praised her ball in a very flattering style, and finally concluded the evening by winning five shillings from her at whist.

All this was very vexatious, very extraordinary, very *unnatural*, yes, *unnatural* was the word, upon which Miss Barbara went to sleep; but when she awoke the next morning, her heart was greatly softened, and, when she thought it all over again, she felt inclined to allow that perhaps it was only prudent, and that he was waiting till everything was settled with the Lord Chancellor about Judith's allowance, before he ventured to take so very decisive a step as to propose marriage.

"And very right—very right!" thought Miss Barbara, though with rather a tender sort of sigh. "Such a man as Dr. Wroughtley would never forgive himself, if he suffered his feelings to betray him into any thing like imprudence."

The post of that very day, however, brought the intelligence she had been so anxiously

looking for; the allowance made for the maintenance of Miss Maitland was six hundred a-year, and the idea of such a sum being added to her own income—for she thought that Judith's private expenses would be almost too trifling to mention—raised her spirits to such a triumphant pitch, that before she had finished her third perusal of the document she actually tossed up her head with an air of defiance, and thought to herself that people who did not know on which side their bread was buttered were much to be pitied; and then she muttered, in a tone that made her parrot utter a sort of grunt by way of imitation, "If he does not like it, he may leave it."

Anybody who really loved and valued Miss Barbara must have rejoiced at the frame of mind produced by such meditations as these. For the time, at least, she felt herself capable of discarding all the weaknesses of love, and of viewing her own position with a degree of satisfaction that might be truly said to put her peace of mind beyond the reach of all the Prebends of the world to disturb it.

This state of mind, while it lasted, might be very justly termed enviable. But few amongst us, I am afraid, are doomed to enjoy any great degree of happiness so perfectly independent of all sentimental silliness long. At any rate, it was not so with Barbara Jenkyns; for while her delight at this news, from a source that she delighted to denominate "the Lord High Chancellor of England," was still almost in its newest gloss, a very startling attack was made upon all her present joys and all her future hopes.

A letter was delivered to her one morning about a fortnight after her ball, while she was in the act of answering a note of invitation to herself and her niece for an evening party, which was doubtless to be another ball, at the house of one of the Prebends.

The poor lady, even as she wrote, was in the very act of making up her mind to commit what under other circumstances she would have considered as a great extravagance in the way of a new head-dress for this occasion, but which her judgment and her conscience united now told her was no more than a liberal feeling of lady-like propriety required.

The letter which broke in upon this double occupation of thinking of her cap and writing to accept an opportunity for wearing it, contained an inclosure addressed to Judith.

"Another invitation," thought Miss Barbara, with a lively smile.

Yes, it was an invitation. It was an invitation from Mr. Frederic Dorking to Miss Judith Maitland, very respectfully, but very earnestly, requesting her to become his wife.

The envelope conveyed the polite expression of his hopes that Miss Jenkyns herself, as well as all other members of the family, would upon inquiry find that his character and position in life, as well as the terms of the settlements which he should offer for their approval, were such as to justify his addressing her charming niece.

Miss Barbara did not scream, but she was very near it, and was probably only prevented from yielding to the impulse by remembering that Mr. Dorking's servant was in the hall; for William had told her that the man was waiting to know if there was any answer.

So she did not scream, but she clasped her hands together for a moment with very painful vehemence.

But in the following moment her spirits recovered again.

"Nonsense!" she murmured, half aloud, and with an accent that expressed scarcely as much terror as contempt. "The young man must be an idiot! absolutely an idiot!—or else he is something worse still. He may have heard of the dear little thing's fortune, and determined not to lose his chance by not being first in the field. It is absolutely horrible!—and, mercy on me! so perfectly disgusting!"

Having thus relieved a little her first overpowering emotions, she rang the bell.

"Tell the person who brought this note, William, that an answer shall be sent."

"The man says, ma'am, that he was ordered to call again for the answer before he left the town," returned William.

"Tell him that the answer shall be sent," said Miss Barbara, with very haughty emphasis on the last word. "And when you have got rid of him, William, come back to me," she added, in a lower key.

William retreated to do her bidding, while Miss Barbara seized the first scrap of paper that came to hand, and having written upon it the words,—

"For pity's sake come to me instantly,
"BARBARA JENKYNs,"

inclosed it in an envelope, and had sealed it with as firm a barricade of wax as might have sufficed for a packet from a Secretary of State, when he re-entered the room.

"Take this, without a moment's delay, to

Dr. Wroughtley," she said, writing the honoured name upon the billet as she spoke; and the moment after she was again alone.

"I am a fool to frighten myself thus!" thought she with an aspect, comparatively speaking, of composure. "What would it signify if a dozen impertinent boys came to ask me, one after another, for her and her fortune?—Such a baby as she is! Poor little soul! not fifteen, not quite fifteen yet, I am certain, for I remember now that her poor mother wrote to us about her christening, and joking about her father's choosing to give her the same old-fashioned name as herself, and I am positive that can't be above twelve, or perhaps thirteen years ago: I am sure it seems like yesterday! Poor little thing! Married, indeed! It is something quite shocking! The man must be a perfect monster!"

And in this way her agitated spirits worked and worried her into alternate paroxysms of hope and despair, till by the time Dr. Wroughtley arrived she really was in a very disturbed condition.

"Why, what's the matter, Miss Barbara?" he exclaimed, before she could find breath to explain herself. Upon my word, you look as if our friend Poll Parrot had been pulling caps with you."

"Oh! Dr. Wroughtley," she exclaimed, instinctively applying both her hands to her "front," and skilfully restoring it to its proper place. "You won't make me laugh to-day, say what you will, for I have had a very great shock!"

"Good gracious! How? Has the chimney been on fire?" he replied.

"The chimney on fire!—I do believe sometimes, Dr. Wroughtley, you think that I am a fool, you say such very odd things to me!—But Heaven knows that all the chimneys in the town might have been on fire, except your own perhaps, without my feeling any thing like what I have felt to-day!" was her touching reply.

"Don't say that I think you a fool, Miss Barbara! Upon my honour and word I do not, and it is for that reason that I must beg you to tell me without further delay what it is which has caused you to send for me in such a hurry." And having said this rather gravely, Dr. Wroughtley seated himself in his accustomed chair, but he did not, as usual, stir the fire.

"Read that, Doctor!" said she, putting Mr. Dorking's note into his hands, and look-

ing at him reproachfully; for she saw that, though he had lost no time in obeying her imperative summons, he did not appear to be particularly gratified by it.

The perusal of Mr. Frederic Dorking's laconic epistle, however, appeared to restore the reverend gentleman to his accustomed good humour in a moment, for he laughed merrily as he read it, and said, as he gave it back, "Only fancy the little rogue's having made a conquest already."

Miss Barbara looked at him with blended astonishment and indignation.

"Do you think it a laughing matter, Dr. Wroughtley?" said she.

"Why, no, my good lady, I don't believe I do—that is, if you mean your question to apply to matrimony—for I have always considered matrimony as a very serious affair; but I certainly think there is something rather amusing in the very quiet way in which your little lady has been carrying on her flirtation. I am sure I had not the least idea of it. Had you?"

"I!" exclaimed Miss Barbara, with a look of horror; "do you ask me, Dr. Wroughtley, if I had any idea that a child who ought to be at school, or else playing with her doll in the nursery,—do you ask me if I had any idea that she was being made love to? Fie, Dr. Wroughtley! Fie! You ought not to ask me such a question—you ought to know me better!"

And here Miss Barbara drew forth her pocket handkerchief, and began to wipe her eyes.

"Come, come, Miss Barbara," said the good-natured Prebend, very kindly, "don't take the matter so very seriously. Miss Judith is decidedly too young to be married, there is no doubt of that, though I cannot help suspecting that she is rather older than you fancy; but however, she is very young,—too young, certainly. Nevertheless, I don't think such an offer as this ought to break your heart, either. Are you aware that the young man is already in possession of seven thousand a-year, and that at the death of his father he will have at least as much more? And are you aware, too, that it is very confidently said by those who know a good deal about the family, (our friends the Claytons, for instance,) that it is pretty certain a dormant title, to which Dorking the father would have been heir if his grandmother had been his grandfather, will be given to the said Dorking, father, immediately?"

Miss Barbara coloured, knit her brows, and looked uncomfortable.

Fourteen thousand a-year and a coronet!

The ideas suggested by this statement were almost too mighty for her comprehension, and besides, she was not at all certain that Dr. Wroughtley was not joking; whereas her own little affair of Judith's six hundred a-year was a plain matter of fact thing, intelligible to the meanest capacity.

"You appear to me to be talking very wildly, Dr. Wroughtley," she said; "and, indeed, it seems quite impossible that any one could talk seriously of marrying a girl of fourteen, or thereabouts. So I do suppose you are only laughing at me altogether."

"Indeed I am not laughing at you, Miss Barbara," he replied; "on the contrary, I really wish you joy, very sincerely. It will be a prodigiously fine match for the young lady, and though I really think her pretty and clever enough to deserve any thing, yet still we ought not to forget that such an offer as this is not likely to happen every day. I do indeed wish you joy, heartily."

"And do you really mean to tell me," said Miss Barbara, looking at him by no means so kindly as usual; "do you really and seriously mean to tell me that I ought to permit a child of that age to be married?"

"There is no absolute necessity for her being married immediately," said her very reasonable adviser. "I think you would be perfectly justified in telling Mr. Frederic Dorking that you cannot give your consent to her being married before she is sixteen. This, according to your present statement, will be waiting two years, and this I think ought to satisfy you."

"Sixteen!—To be married at sixteen?—It is perfectly shocking, Dr. Wroughtley!" exclaimed Miss Barbara, looking very angry.

"Well, then, say seventeen," replied the Doctor. "If he loves her as he ought to do, he will consent to wait three years, rather than give her up altogether. Shall you approve the match if he will consent to this, Miss Barbara?"

"What I shall propose," replied the lady, "would be that we should express ourselves highly gratified, of course, and all that sort of thing, with his flattering proposal; but add, as civilly as possible, that her friends cannot listen to any thing of the kind at present, as the young lady is not as yet of an age to think about marriage. That is what ought to be said, Dr. Wroughtley."

Dr. Wroughtley however did not seem quite to approve it.

"Are you quite sure, Miss Barbara," said he, "that you are correct about the age of your niece? Both in appearance and manner she strikes me as being very womanly for fourteen."

"I don't think I said fourteen, Dr. Wroughtley. She may be rather more than fourteen. But a month or two makes no difference, and the real fact is, that she is a great deal too young to be married."

"It would be a great pity, my good friend, to refuse such a match as this for her. And, to tell you the truth, I have more reasons than one for thinking so. My opinion is that the young lady likes him. I strongly suspect, Miss Barbara, that, young as she is, the love is mutual."

This insinuation seemed to wound Miss Barbara Jenkyns deeply. She became very red, and looked very angry.

"Love!" she exclaimed, indignantly. "It is a dreadful suspicion to throw upon a poor innocent child like that, Dr. Wroughtley, and, if I had not heard you say the words with my own ears, I would not have believed that you could have spoken so. Love, indeed! It is perfectly shocking!"

"Upon my word, Miss Barbara, I don't think so," replied the doctor, looking very much inclined to laugh, though he knit his brows and rubbed his chin as gravely as he could. "But at any rate, you know, as the gentleman has written to Miss Judith herself, Miss Judith herself must answer him; and if my notions respecting the state of her little heart be correct, and that her answer does not quite condemn the youth to despair, why then, you know, as her guardian, you will have a right to insist upon a little delay."

"A little delay!" cried the vexed lady, with a deep groan. "I do not know you this morning, Dr. Wroughtley! But I suppose it is because the whole thing is so ridiculous that you cannot persuade yourself to treat it seriously. Just fancy, if you please, what any person of common sense would say, if they were speaking seriously, of my letting such a child as that receive a love-letter and answer it!"

"Why you do not mean to keep the letter from her, do you, Miss Barbara?" said the doctor, looking her full in the face with very unfeigned astonishment.

"Indeed I do mean it," she replied, with mingled indignation and dignity.

Dr. Wroughtley did not

“Wink as a *Prebend* ought not to wink,”

but he uttered a low shrill whistle, such as prebends are not in the habit of producing; nay, he did more, for seeing that Miss Barbara, upon hearing this very unclerical note of remonstrance, had clutched with a sudden movement the letter addressed to her niece, and at the same moment glanced towards the fire very much as if she meditated its immediate destruction, he seized the lady's hand and the note together, saying, in a very friendly but very serious tone, “You must not do that, my dear lady; you must not, I assure you.”

During the whole course of their long acquaintance it is probable that Dr. Wroughtley had never shown, or indeed had any opportunity of showing, so truly friendly a feeling towards Miss Barbara as he exhibited at that moment; but, really, the indignation of the lady could scarcely have been greater had he manifested his difference of opinion by boxing her ears.

Her feelings, poor soul, were indeed of a nature which it was quite impossible for him to understand, and if the sudden and violent destruction of all her fondest hopes may be considered as an excuse for being in a passion, the unfortunate Miss Barbara might be excused.

Was this the man whose admirable and estimable prudence in waiting to ascertain the amount of her improved income had alone checked his declaration of the tenderest sentiments to herself? Could this audacious pleader for another's passion, and one that would for ever deprive her of any allowance at all, be the same who had so lately displayed such flattering, such touching anxiety to eat a *tête-à-tête* dinner with her? The change seemed too violent to be possible, yet so it was!

It would be scarcely fair, perhaps, to blame her quite as much as, strictly speaking, she deserved for the suspicions respecting poor Dr. Wroughtley's motives which mixed themselves with her despair; but certain it is that the possibility of the friendly prebend's looking forward to future preferment, through the interest of Mr. Frederic Dorking, did suggest itself. But nothing could be more perfectly unjust. Nay, at that very moment, it was much more for the sake of Miss Barbara herself than for that of any other person concerned, that the reverend gentleman was so

anxious to prevent the threatened destruction of the *billet doux*.

“Stop, stop, stop! Miss Barbara,” he exclaimed, as he still forcibly held her hand. “If the young man is bent upon telling Miss Judith that he is in love with her, your burning a hundred letters will not prevent his doing it; but if you do such a thing as that, you know, there is nothing that you can ever do or say afterwards that can undo it.”

The earnestness of his manner rather frightened her, and she began to suspect that the burning letters consigned to her care might not always be the best way of doing business; but, nevertheless, she was much too angry to yield to his remonstrance graciously, or even to adopt his view of the case, as to the necessity that the young man's letter should ever reach its destination at all.

“Don't alarm yourself, Dr. Wroughtley, about anything that I am likely to do,” said she, with a very contemptuous look. “I thank my stars I can take care of myself! And really, if I could not, I am not at present quite certain that I should apply to *you* for advice. I used indeed to think you a very sensible man, Dr. Wroughtley; but I feel a little doubt about it at present.”

“Very well, my dear lady,” he replied, with great good humour, “I must not break my heart about that, if I can help it; and I don't much think I shall, because, to tell you the truth, I expect you will change your mind again upon that point some day or other. However, I will not make an unconscionably long visit, now that I am in disgrace. I will go directly, if you will promise me, like a good honourable lady as you are, that you will transmit that pretty-looking little letter there to its proper owner.”

Miss Barbara took a moment for consideration before she replied; but at length she seemed in some degree to recover herself, for she said, “Yes, Dr. Wroughtley, I do promise it;” and she even smiled as she said so.

“That's well, then,” he returned, as he left the room; adding, with a cheerful nod, “Good-bye, good-bye! I am sure you'll forgive me to-morrow.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

MISS BARBARA JENKINS would have deemed it a very unworthy act to break a promise, and one of which she felt herself to be quite incapable; but, at the same time, she felt herself quite at liberty to decide, according to her own judgment, as to the manner in

which any and every promise she made should be kept.

On the present occasion, in particular, she had her own notions, and very firmly did she resolve to abide thereby.

Having waited for the space of nearly sixty seconds after hearing the house door close, announcing the departure of Dr. Wroughtley, she took a neat envelope from her desk, placed the pretty-looking little letter within it, sealed it very nicely, and then, in a clear business-like hand, wrote the following address, "To Frederic Dorking, Esq., Clayton Hall." Having contemplated her neat handwriting with great complacency, while waiting till the ink should become dry without the injurious intervention of blotting-paper, she again rang her bell, and it was with a voice of more than usual dignity that she said to her man William, as she placed it in his hand, "Let this be given to the Clayton Hall servant when he calls."

"It wasn't one of the Clayton Hall servants that brought the letter, ma'am," said William, as he received the important document; and, as he said it, there was in his eye a look of half confidential intelligence which his long service prevented from being impertinent perhaps, but which, nevertheless, was exceedingly annoying to Miss Barbara.

She looked at him very sternly, as she replied, "Give it to the person who brought the letter I received this morning. You must know that was what I meant."

William was schooled, and instantly assumed a look of very respectful stupidity; but not the less for that did William feel very perfectly persuaded that there was something particular going on, in which the handsome young gentleman who was staying at Clayton Hall, and the beautiful young lady who was come to live with his respected mistress, had a great deal to do.

It is a very weak miscomprehension of domestic arrangements to believe that servants do not know quite as well as their masters what is going on in the drawing-room, or the ball-room either.

Judith had already been at several West-hampton balls, and had never failed to dance very many times with Mr. Frederic Dorking at each. Moreover, the Williams, and the Johns, and the Thomases of the town had on very many occasions seen Judith escorted by the same young gentleman in her morning walks. It is true, indeed, that, upon these walking excursions, the Dean's lady was al-

ways of the party; but what difference did that make? And where was the William, the John, or the Thomas dull enough to suppose that it did?

So the letter was not given to Mr. Dorking's servant by Miss Barbara's servant without a little friendly gossip being exchanged between them concerning its probable contents.

The unconscious Judith, meanwhile, took the accustomed path to the Dean's residence, and installed herself as usual at Mrs. Chilbert's piano-forte, her love for music increasing in proportion to the power which she found it gave her of delighting her friend, and in proportion, also, to the rapid progress which she herself soon became conscious she was making in it. And then, as usual, she passed a very happy morning, not perhaps without an occasional thought as to the probability that her musical studies, and her miscellaneous chitchat with her charming friend, might be interrupted by one of those not unfrequent calls from Mr. Frederic Dorking, which both ladies, to say the truth, were beginning to consider as a natural, and not a very disagreeable, part of the day's history.

But no such interruption came. There might be, and there probably was, a feeling a little akin to disappointment in both; but they were too discreet to say anything to each other on the subject, and parted at last exactly in time to prevent the dinner of Miss Barbara from being spoiled by waiting.

But something or other—it was impossible for Judith to guess what—had annoyed Miss Barbara, for she looked angry, red, and very cross, and had by no means her usual excellent appetite, a circumstance of very rare occurrence.

As the dull evening wore away, poor Judith began to feel very weary and woe-begone, and very earnestly did she hope that half-past seven o'clock might bring Dr. Wroughtley and the whist-table, which would at least have saved her from the dismal task of performing some very unmeaning stitchery face to face with aunt Barbara, and the misery of inventing little speeches about once in ten minutes, to prevent her being addressed herself by the detestable question, "What are you thinking about, my dear?" which would infallibly have been addressed to her.

But her wishes were vain, for no Dr. Wroughtley came, and the only event which occurred to break the monotony of the dismal evening was the arrival of a note from Mrs.

Chilbert, which, strange to say, instead of relieving her ennui, increased it tenfold. The note only contained these words, which were certainly anything but agreeable.

"My dearest Judith,—Do not come to me to-morrow morning; I shall be engaged in a manner that will render it quite impossible for me to receive you. But as soon as I am at liberty again, I will let you know it, and then I hope you will come to me *instantly*, to atone to me for the privation I am compelled thus to inflict upon myself.

"But believe me ever, whether absent or present, your devoted friend,

"LAURA CHILBERT."

"Is there any answer, Miss?" said William, re-entering the room, after having left it for about five minutes.

"No!" replied Judith, throwing the unwelcome note into the fire as she spoke.

"Is not that rather an uncivil message to send to the Deanery, Judith?" said Miss Barbara, looking very much as if she longed to scold her.

"It was not meant as a message," replied Judith. "The note did not require any answer."

Miss Barbara thought the whole affair extremely mysterious, and she watched the expiring embers of the note which had fallen from the grate, and was breathing fragrance as it died away, with a very disagreeable sensation of hopeless curiosity.

That the reader may not share this unpleasant feeling, the circumstances of the case shall be fully explained to him, when he will perceive that, as usual, Mrs. Dean had done precisely what was right.

Mr. Frederic Dorking's servant was a well-trained domestic, and no loiterer; the packet, therefore, which had been directed to his master by Miss Barbara Jenkyns, and which contained his own unopened letter to Judith, reached his hands with as little delay as possible.

Frederic Dorking was very far from being an ill-tempered man; but, on receiving this offensive inclosure, he became as vehemently angry as it was well possible for a well-tempered young gentleman to be. And in this there was little or nothing that could be justly blamed; for, in the first place, he was very heartily and sincerely in love; in the second, he had very sufficient reason for hoping that his feelings were, to say the least, not displeasing to the fair object who

had inspired them; and, thirdly, he was quite aware that the offer which was thus insultingly sent back to him was one which some of the fairest and noblest in the land would have received more graciously.

He had prudently taken care to be alone when the answer to his important letter reached him, although the emotion he had anticipated was assuredly not precisely of the nature which he now felt; but while he stood positively trembling from excess both of anger and disappointment, it suddenly occurred to him that the lovely Judith herself was evidently no party to either, for his letter to her was returned unopened.

The relief produced by this was great indeed; his hope, his more than hope, his delightful confidence of success, returned to him, and with a happy smile at his own folly and the presumptuous impertinence of the she-dragon who guarded the treasure he was more than ever determined to win, he threw himself upon his sofa to meditate at ease on the measures which he must now take in order to defeat the extraordinary machinations of the old lady.

It almost instantly occurred to him that his charming friend, Mrs. Chilbert, was the person to whom he ought to apply to assist him in his very singular embarrassment. He was pretty tolerably certain that she was neither ignorant of his intentions nor hostile to them, and, moreover, he had seen enough of her to be sure that whatever advice she might give would be dictated equally by kindness and discretion. Before the Clayton Hall dinner-bell rang, he had written and dispatched the following brief epistle:—

"My dear Mrs. Chilbert,—Do not think that I encroach too presumptuously on your kindness if I ask you to let me see you for half an hour, *alone*, to-morrow morning. I shall be at Westhampton by mid-day, and if I do not find your door defended against me, I shall be very truly grateful.

"Faithfully yours,

"FREDERIC DORKING."

Mrs. Chilbert did not write any answer to this note, but told her servant to say "very well."

And this was the engagement which the Dean's lady considered to be of sufficient importance to prevent its being interrupted even by her petted friend, Judith Maitland.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

It was very punctually at mid-day that Mr. Dorking was ushered into Mrs. Chilbert's drawing-room. There was nothing in the least degree approaching embarrassment on the part of the lady, and very little on that of the gentleman. Her mother-wit had enabled her to predict, with a confidence which pretty nearly amounted to certainty, that Judith was to be the subject of their *tête-à-tête*; and his estimate of Mrs. Chilbert's sagacity was sufficiently just to make him feel equally sure that she so interpreted his note.

The friendly smile with which she held out her hand as he approached her rendered all that was to follow perfectly easy on both sides.

Her indignation at learning the undue exercise of authority displayed by her "utter aversion," Miss Barbara, was everything he could wish it to be; while the delicately-hinted encouragement which, under the circumstances, she thought herself justified in giving was precisely sufficient to sustain his hope that the affront he had received had in no way originated with his lady love, but was entirely and altogether the result of her detestable maiden aunt's wish to prevent her marrying.

"But why should she wish to prevent it?" demanded the young man, his colour modestly heightened by the consciousness that the proposal he had made was not such a one as maiden aunts in general would be likely to disapprove; and thereupon Mrs. Chilbert, with her usual *tact* and delicacy, took occasion to mention the particulars of Judith's fortune and position, taking the liberty of hinting that in her opinion the conduct of Miss Barbara Jenkyns could only be explained by supposing that she wished to retain the guardianship of a niece, for whose accommodation a very liberal stipend would doubtless be allowed by the Court of Chancery.

"Infamous!" exclaimed Mr. Dorking, with very natural indignation.

"It is indeed infamous," replied Mrs. Chilbert; "so much so, indeed, that I should scruple, greatly as I dislike the individual, to attribute such exceeding vileness to her, had I not some reason for doing so. But I happen to know that she has uttered a most preposterous untruth in stating Miss Maitland's age. She told Dr. Wroughtley that she was very little more than fourteen, whereas I happen to know from Judith herself, that she

was sixteen her last birthday. That she has an interested motive for all this is certain."

"Infamous!" again exclaimed Mr. Dorking.

"I do not wonder at your feeling very indignant at such a statement," returned Mrs. Chilbert, smiling, "and the more so, perhaps, because it is not quite impossible that other persons, your own family for instance, may still think my dear little Judith somewhat too young to marry, although two years older than her precious aunt states her to be."

"I own I thought from her form and stature that she must at least be seventeen," said the young man, anxiously, and looking as if he hoped that his kind friend had blundered a little in her statement.

"No!" she replied, shaking her head, "Judith is little more than sixteen, I assure you; and though I see no reason why she should not be made acquainted with your flattering attachment, I confess that I think you must wait a little before you marry. I think she ought to be in her eighteenth year first."

Frederic Dorking breathed a very lover-like sigh as he listened to these words; nevertheless he answered with a degree of candour which did him honour, that he thought she was right.

"As I have your sanction for doing so," he continued, "I shall declare my hopes to her before I leave the neighbourhood; and if I am favourably listened to, I think I shall have the courage to leave everything else in your hands."

"You do me honour," replied Mrs. Chilbert, smiling, and then added more seriously, "and I flatter myself that you do me justice too; for sure I am that if Judith Maitland were my own daughter, I could not feel more anxious than I now do to lead her aright."

"I do indeed believe it, my dear Mrs. Chilbert," he replied; "and do me the equal justice of believing that looking forward, as I dare venture to do, to making your lovely friend my wife, I feel the very deepest gratitude to fate and fortune for having placed her, at this important period of her existence, within reach of your influence. Poor little angel! I know not what would become of her just now without you! What would be her fate had she only her aunt Barbara?"

"I certainly do flatter myself that I have been some comfort, ay, and of some use to her also, since she has come among us. And

if, when your own higher claims are established, you will still permit it, I think my usefulness may continue for some time longer yet," replied Mrs. Chilbert.

Mr. Dorking probably thought that the future usefulness to which she alluded was to be displayed in assisting at the selection of the wedding garments, for his answer was the happiest of all possible smiles; but this was not Mrs. Chilbert's meaning.

"I need not ask you," she resumed, "what your opinion is of our sweet Judith's musical ability, for I have watched you when she has been singing, and assuredly no *fanatico* ever appeared more completely spell-bound by sweet words. But, as you have assured us that you practise not the art you seem so well to love, I think it very likely that you may already consider Judith's singing as near perfection as it is possible for any performance of a mortal to be."

"Indeed I do, Mrs. Chilbert!" he very energetically replied.

"Now, then," she said, laughing, "now I shall put your good temper to a most tremendous trial, for truth obliges me to declare that in this belief you are completely mistaken."

The young man coloured, but he smiled too, and therefore he probably was not very angry; but he was conscious of being most profoundly ignorant, and not choosing to confess that it was not without difficulty he could distinguish "God save the Queen" from "Ça ira," he replied, very adroitly, "That just at present it would be very difficult for him to persuade himself that anything done by Judith Maitland could be otherwise than well done."

"Perfectly natural, and therefore perfectly as it ought to be," replied Mrs. Chilbert; "and for that very reason you know it becomes my duty, in my character of Mentor, to take care that my dear disciple be not left too implicitly to your guidance. Judith must positively have a few singing lessons, Mr. Dorking, before she is promoted to the honours of matrimony."

"Fear not that I should oppose it, even were I already happy enough to have all power over her. But how is this to be managed? Or rather, to speak more honestly how is her removal from the power of this she-dragon to be effected? How can I expect to be received by her on such a footing as I dare to hope for, as long as she remains under the protection of the lady who, with-

out deigning to reply to my letter to herself, has sent back that which was enclosed in it for her niece, unopened?"

"Yes, there are difficulties before us, Mr. Dorking," replied the Dean's lady, rather gravely, "I cannot deny it. However honourable, flattering, and advantageous your proposal may be, it will not do to make the Deanery the place of rendezvous between a young lady and a lover, who has been treated by her appointed guardian, as you have been. You can easily understand this, I am sure."

"Too easily, much too easily, dearest Mrs. Chilbert," he replied. "And do not for a moment suppose that I would ever wish it. It would be equally objectionable for us all. The only favour which at this moment I will venture to ask of you," he continued, after the interval of a moment given to meditation, "is, that you would permit me to meet Miss Maitland here for half-an-hour, in your presence, before I leave this neighbourhood."

"And that one favour I readily grant," replied Mrs. Chilbert; "for I think the granting it much preferable to the alternative upon which my refusal would throw you, namely, that of attempting a clandestine correspondence with my young friend by letter."

"Assuredly such would be my only alternative," he replied, "and I shall ever feel grateful to you for saving me from it. In your presence, then, I will renew the proposal I have already made; and my dearest hope must stand or fall, according to the manner in which it shall be received. If this tremendous ordeal be passed favourably, I shall immediately state to my father and mother what has taken place, and we must flatter ourselves, that by their intervention, this awful aunt Barbara may be induced to treat me somewhat more graciously."

"I most sincerely hope that we shall so manage matters as to find ourselves perfectly independent of Miss Barbara and her graciousness, which, trust me, would never be of a quality and flavour that we should any of us greatly relish," said Mrs. Chilbert. "Perhaps you are not yet aware," she continued, "that my dear Judith has another aunt residing in London; and though she also is of the old maid species, and a little quizzical too in her way, she is a much less disagreeable specimen than our Miss Barbara. It rests with Judith, I believe, to decide with which of her two aunts she will reside; and,

after what has happened here, I should imagine that any aunt in the world would be deemed preferable to our Miss Barbara. Heaven only knows what I shall do without my sweet Judith. But I shall scarcely be sufficiently selfish to advise her remaining at Westhampton. It is greatly more likely that I shall coax my kind husband into passing a spring month or two in London, and in that case, Mr. Dorking, it is probable we may meet again. And now, as I have given you the advantage of all the information I possess, it only remains for you to tell me when your attack direct upon my little Judith is to come off."

Even as Mrs. Chilbert uttered these light-sounding words the colour mounted to her delicate cheek, and a tear to her eye, and she added, with a sort of abrupt earnestness that was very unlike her usual manner, "Upon my word, Mr. Dorking, I shall be one of the most unhappy women living, if I do not find, upon longer acquaintance, that you are everything I wish you to be! I tremble, very literally I tremble, Mr. Dorking, lest I should be acting rashly in this matter. She is such a sweet creature! And at this moment the happiness of her whole life is at stake; and that I, knowing you so little as I do, should dare to take so very decided a part, actually terrifies me."

And here the graceful self-possession, the habitual *savoir faire*, the intense aversion to everything like sentimental display, which all, and each, made so essential a part of Mrs. Chilbert's character, gave way before natural feeling, and she wept as heartily as if she had been a poor curate's wife, who had never heard of such a thing as *bienséance* in her life.

Mr. Frederic Dorking, too, was one of those who, like herself, cling very tenaciously to the conventional graces and proprieties of life, and who, even while thinking themselves authorized by their position to do what they like, on many occasions, when it would be fitting for less favoured individuals to be governed by a different law, rarely lose sight of the code which regulates all things relating to the usages of good society; and no one could ever have accused him of making a display of any sentiment too profound, either in quality or quantity, to justify his expecting sympathy from those by whom he was usually surrounded. But he, as well as his fair adviser, was too much in earnest at this moment to shape his words, or the manner of utter-

ing them, by any rule save that of genuine feeling; and so earnest and so solemn was the tone in which he besought her to believe that he felt the immense importance of the assistance she was giving him; "And not that only," he added, "but I feel the immense importance also of the deed you are doing; and all I can say, all I can do rather, is, to prove to you, by my future conduct, that I am not unworthy the confidence which you have so generously placed in me."

There was so much real feeling in the manner with which these words were spoken, that they could not fail in producing the effect which the speaker desired. Mrs. Chilbert wiped her tears away, and the remainder of the interview was passed in arranging the manner in which the young Judith should be made acquainted with the serious nature of the attachment she had inspired.

Mrs. Chilbert felt that it spoke well for the delicacy of Judith's lover when he told her it was his wish that she should acquaint the orphan girl with his proposal, before he was admitted to plead his own cause.

"I might judge differently on this point," he said, "if her only ostensible protector for the present were a more efficient one than this detestable aunt, whose vulgar impertinence has placed herself absolutely beyond the reach of any farther civility, or consideration of any kind. Nay, if the sweet girl herself were a few years older, I should not shrink, as I now do, from the idea of startling her by an abrupt proposal."

"You are right—most right, Mr. Dorking!" replied Mrs. Chilbert, with such eager cordiality of approval as settled the point at once; and he left her with the understanding that Judith should be invited to take a *tête-à-tête* drive with her immediately, and that if he would repeat his visit at the Deanery on the morrow, it was possible that he might find her passing a long quiet day with her friend.

"God bless you, dearest Mrs. Chilbert!" exclaimed the agitated young man, as he pressed her hand to his lips. "Never, never can I hope to make you feel all the gratitude you have inspired!" And then returning, after he had left the room for a moment, he added, "Do not let me come to-morrow if she receives what you will say to her to-day unkindly or coldly. If I hear nothing from you I shall come. But if—if I receive a note from you either to-night, or to-morrow morning early, I shall leave the Hall directly,

and you shall not see me again, dearest Mrs. Chilbert, till I have forgotten every thing connected with Westhampton, except your kindness."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE Dean's lady allowed herself about ten minutes to restore her nerves to a proper degree of composure, and then dispatched one of the little billets which she was in the habit of sending to Judith, and which brought her, as she well knew it would do, without a moment of unnecessary delay.

"How very, very kind it is in you to send for me!" exclaimed Judith. "I am afraid to tell you how broken-hearted your last night's note made me; for if I do, you will at once discover how completely you have spoiled me."

"Did you at all try to guess, Judith, the cause of my sending you that note?" said Mrs. Chilbert.

"There was no need of guessing, dear lady," replied Judith, "for you told me that you had an engagement. And you have not yet so completely turned my head, as to make me doubt the possibility of your having any engagement in which I was not concerned."

"But you were concerned in this engagement," returned Mrs. Chilbert, looking at her rather earnestly. "Will my saying this enable you to guess who my visitor might be?"

Judith blushed like the red, red rose, but only shook her head in reply.

"Yes, my dear, you are quite right. You are quick at guessing, I see. That is very clever of you, Judith."

"What *can* you mean, Mrs. Chilbert?" said Judith, endeavouring to look as innocent and unconscious as possible. "I have not guessed any thing, I do assure you."

"Never mind, Judith! Matters have gone a vast deal too far for jesting. And instead of our thus idly amusing ourselves, it has become my duty to speak, and yours to listen, with a degree of earnestness that may be more solemn than jocose. Frederic Dorking has been with me this morning, my dear Judith, and, being acute enough to find out that I love you dearly, has chosen me as a proper negotiator between you. He loves you, my dear child, he loves you devotedly, as he says, and as I sincerely believe, and he has commissioned me to ask if you will be his wife."

Mrs. Chilbert had indeed banished every thing like levity from her manner as she said this, and either her unwonted gravity, or the solemnity of the words she uttered, at once banished the roses from the cheeks of Judith, and left her as pale as a lily.

Mrs. Chilbert took her hand, and looked at her with a feeling of alarm. "I have been too sudden; I have startled you, my sweet Judith. And yet, dearest, it is, I think, impossible that you can be very greatly surprised at hearing it. You surely knew perfectly well that he admired you."

"But wanting me to marry him! Oh, Mrs. Chilbert! that is quite a different thing. I am so very young, Mrs. Chilbert!—Indeed, indeed, I do not think he ought to have said any thing about it yet."

"Nor would he, Judith, were he not immediately about to leave the neighbourhood," returned her friend.

"Is he going?" said Judith, in an accent which certainly did not manifest any very great delight at receiving the information.

"Yes, Judith. He is going to the house of his father, and I think you must therefore forgive him if he has made his declaration rather hastily."

"Forgive him? I did not mean that I was angry with him, dear Mrs. Chilbert!" said Judith. "But, indeed, indeed, I am too young!"

"Most assuredly you are so, dear love!" replied her friend. "And so I told him, Judith, and he is ready, though not perhaps quite willing, to wait till you are older. Therefore, you are not to answer him as if he had asked you to marry him immediately, but you are to examine your own heart, my dear child, and ask yourself whether you think you like him well enough to promise that you will marry him when you are older."

Judith remained silent for a minute or two, and then said, "Is not that a very difficult question to answer?"

"No, Judith, I should think not," replied Mrs. Chilbert. "But if you feel it to be so, it will be safer perhaps to answer it in the negative."

"I am sure I do not know what is best," said Judith, musingly.

"Did you ever see anybody you liked better?" said Mrs. Chilbert.

"No!—Oh, no!" responded Judith.

"Did you ever see any one you liked so well?" inquired Mrs. Chilbert.

"No, Mrs. Chilbert, I never did," returned Judith, with considerable decision of voice and manner.

"Then I should think it was a pity to reject one who has so much to recommend him, and who has given so decided a proof of attachment to you," said the Dean's lady, very gravely.

"Reject him, Mrs. Chilbert! No! I would not reject him out and out, and really for ever, for the whole world, for I am sure I shall never see anybody that I shall think equal to him! But yet it seems almost wrong to promise so many years beforehand."

"So many years, Judith?" repeated Mrs. Chilbert, laughing. "How old, my dear, do you think it necessary you should be before you marry?"

"I believe I must be twenty-one before I shall have a right to marry whom I like," said Judith, gravely.

"But what makes you suppose that your guardians will object to your marrying Mr. Dorking before you are of age? Has any thing passed upon the subject between you and Miss Barbara, to give you the idea that she would object to it?"

"Do you suppose, my dearest Mrs. Chilbert, that I should ever dream of mentioning Mr. Dorking to my aunt Barbara?" said Judith, in a voice which seemed to express indignation at the proposal, as well as averseness to adopting it.

"And why not, dear child? Mr. Dorking is *an eligible* of the very first quality," replied Mrs. Chilbert, who felt rather curiously anxious to ascertain what might already have passed between the aunt and niece concerning him. "Why should you feel so very decided a repugnance to naming him to your aunt?"

"I am sure you will say I am in love with him if I tell you," returned Judith, colouring.

"Well! And, if I do say so, it could not wound your feelings now, Judith, could it?" said Mrs. Chilbert.

"Yes, it would, dear Mrs. Chilbert," she replied, "because I know very well that I have not as yet seen enough of him to like him as much as I believe I do like him; and his telling you that he liked me, you know, would not be any excuse for that. However, the real truth is, that I cannot bear to talk of anybody I like to my aunt Barbara. I would not mention your name before her for more than I will say."

"Why, what would happen if you did, dearest?" said Mrs. Chilbert, laughing. "Would she abuse me, Judith?"

"No, Mrs. Chilbert, I have no right at all to say that I think she would abuse you; but I am quite sure that she would say something cold and hard that I could not bear," returned Judith.

Mrs. Chilbert thanked her for this little burst of affection by a kiss, and then said, a little maliciously, "And you thought she would say something cold and hard about Mr. Dorking, Judith?"

But Judith was now too much in earnest to be checked by her playful manner, and replied with characteristic honesty, "Yes."

"Now then, dearest, I will be as candid with you as you have been with me, and will prove to your entire satisfaction that you were perfectly right in yielding to the sort of instinct which prevented your talking about Mr. Dorking to your aunt."

Mrs. Chilbert then proceeded to state briefly, but very clearly, the history of the letter, and its return to the writer with its unopened inclosure to herself, and it instantly became evident that not all the pleading in the world, no not even if the fascinating Frederic Dorking had been there to urge his claims in person, could so effectually have overpowered every obstacle to his wishes as this plain statement. The battle had been fought and won.

There was, in truth, something in the whole transaction particularly well calculated to produce on the mind of Judith exactly the effect which her lover would have wished it should do. For, young as she was, Judith was perfectly capable of appreciating the frank and honourable conduct of Mr. Dorking, as well as the unmerited and most unjustifiable insolence with which it had been received.

He had been ill-treated—he had been insulted; and this was quite enough to give him interest in the eyes of Judith, even if the multitude of his "good gifts" had not already gone far in softening the heart of the young beauty in his favour.

All that remained of Mrs. Chilbert's task was performed, as may easily be imagined, without difficulty. Her young favourite was only too happy in listening to all her suggestions as to what would be the best mode of her passing the interval between the present time and her arriving at the age of eighteen, a period at which Mrs. Chilbert thought all

such consent as was required for the marriage would be very easily obtained for such proposals as Mr. Dorking had the power of making.

"And the interval, though it may seem long to us now, Judith, will pass very rapidly away," said Mrs. Chilbert. "You told me, dearest, did you not, that your kind mother's testamentary letter gave you the power of choice as to which of your two maiden aunts you should reside with?"

"Most fully," replied Judith, joyously. "I know the clause by heart, Mrs. Chilbert; and yet, though the reading it again and again has been often a great comfort to me, as it showed that I had the power to escape when I could bear Miss Barbara's ways no longer, yet," she repeated, while tears started to her eyes, "I never ceased to remember, that when I got rid of her I should lose you. And this has kept me from ever seriously thinking that I should take advantage of it before the time that was fixed at my first arrival for my going to my aunt Elfreda. But now—"

"Now, my dear child, the sooner you leave her the better," replied Mrs. Chilbert. "Her conduct has been most unwarrantable in every way, and I really think that Frederic Dorking, when he is your accepted lover, Judith, may feel that the sooner you leave the protection of a person who has so offensively treated him the better. My indignation, I confess, is very greatly increased by the unmistakable cupidity of her motives. Had the Chancellor not made you a very liberal allowance, Judith, Miss Barbara Jenkyns would not so very strangely have forgotten herself. With her motives, however, be they what they may, we have nothing to do. My advice that you should change her protection for that of your aunt Elfreda is the result of her conduct, and not of her motives."

"But how shall I bear to part from you?" said Judith, mournfully.

"I flatter myself that our parting will not be a very long one, Judith. My dear kind husband yearly indulges me with a month or two in London during the spring. He has a very dear sister there, and soon we shall have you also; and the Dean is not the man to say 'No, I won't,' when I state my wishes to him."

This was very delightful news to Judith, and the brightness of young hope, that now rapidly began to chase all the doubts, and fears, and agitations which had assailed her during the first part of this important conver-

sation, was very like the rising of the sun upon a dewy and a misty morning, when cloud after cloud gradually melts away, and nothing is left but that lovely mixture of sunshine and shade, without which not even nature herself could be beautiful.

CHAPTER XXX.

Love scenes are, for the most part, held sacred, and such shall be the reverential treatment bestowed upon the interview between Frederic Dorking and Judith Maitland, which concluded by their parting affianced to each other, and each profoundly convinced that the world could not contain any other being in the slightest degree capable, in any way, of being compared to the perfect being to whom this mutually pledged faith was plighted.

But though the mere love passages of this interview may be omitted, during which, indeed, even Mrs. Chilbert herself happened to leave the room, there were some matters discussed which, if kept secret, would render the progress of my narrative exceedingly obscure; such, for instance, as were needful for the arrangement of Judith's greatly-desired change of residence.

Mr. Dorking was very temperate in his language, and unimpeachably gentlemanlike in his manner of discussing the subject; but nevertheless, it was very clearly evident that he did not wish his future wife to remain longer than was absolutely necessary under the protection of a lady so very decidedly hostile to him.

Judith, too, behaved extremely well, and, no longer having the dread of a protracted residence with Miss Barbara and her parrot before her eyes, she permitted the native generosity of her young heart to plead (very liberally) in mitigation of damages.

"If it be true, dearest Mrs. Chilbert," said she, "that the cause of her behaving in the unwarrantable manner she has done is the want of money, do contrive for me that, in some manner or other, she shall be paid for her disappointment. How can we manage it without offending her?"

"There is not the least danger of offending her by doing as you wish, my dear," said her friend, "let the manner be what it may. But she really does not deserve any very delicate degree of consideration."

"But Judith's feelings, dearest lady, deserve all consideration," said Mr. Dorking, with an earnestness of eye and tone which

would have sufficed to convince Judith that he was the most adorable human being in existence, had any proof of this been still wanting.

And then it was settled that Mrs. Chilbert should manage the whole affair through the friendly agency of Dr. Wroughtley.

"He will be an excellent middle-man to negotiate for us," said she, "for, strange as it may seem that Miss Barbara and I should have any point of sympathy between us, it is, I believe, nevertheless certain, that we both of us are excessively fond of Dr. Wroughtley. I love him for his good heart, and she loves him for his good whist. So it only remains for you to tell me, my dear, the amount of the gratuity you wish to bestow upon her."

"Do not call it a gratuity," said Judith, trying to look angry. "I should wish that she should receive the same sum when I leave her, that she would have done had I remained with her till the 21st April, when, according to agreement, I was to go to my aunt Elfreda."

"Your wishes shall be laws," said Mrs. Chilbert, solemnly.

"And if I have not money enough, you will trust me?" said Judith, with the innocent frankness of a child.

"Yes, I will, darling," replied her friend, looking at her with almost as much loving admiration as her lover himself.

And then they agreed, in this council of three, that Judith should immediately write to her aunt Elfreda, stating to her that, for some reasons to be explained hereafter, she wished to leave her aunt Barbara immediately, and come to her.

"I will not cause you to fall into a fit by telling you that your aunt Elfreda has got a twin soul to that of your aunt Barbara, but I will just put you at your ease respecting any doubts you might entertain respecting her being ready to receive you. Maiden aunts of moderate incomes are ever, by an immutable law of nature, perfectly ready and willing to receive young nieces under their protection, if a Lord Chancellor allows them six hundred a-year for doing so. Do you not agree with me, Mr. Dorking?"

"I wish she were not an heiress," was his reply. "I should not be the least surprised if her aunt Barbara thought that her being so was the cause of my proposing to her. You must forgive me, sweet Judith, if the cruel rebuff I received yesterday has left a feeling not much akin to kindness towards the old lady."

"Alas! Mr. Dorking," replied Judith, "if the being very heartily angry with aunt Barbara be a sin, I am a very offending soul as well as yourself. Nor do I believe that Mrs. Chilbert has a much clearer conscience on that point than we have. But do not let us talk any more about her! You two, you know, may do it so much more innocently than I can; for though I find it very difficult to believe, the truth is, that she is my own dear mother's sister."

"And that shall protect her for ever and for ever from all severity, even in thought, from me!" said the young man, with very graceful eagerness.

The two ladies exchanged a rapid glance, but each said to the other by the aid of it, "Is he not the most charming creature in the world?" Perhaps, on the part of Judith, the epithet *adorable*, in the place of charming, would more justly express her feelings.

The interview, as may easily be supposed, lingered on till Mrs. Chilbert herself was obliged to bring it to a conclusion, by saying, "And now you must positively go, Mr. Dorking. As to Miss Barbara's dinner hour, it has long been passed, and what sort of apology Judith means to make for keeping her waiting, I am at a loss to guess. I do not mean even to delay her punishment by asking her to dine here, because the moment I can get rid of you both I shall sit down and write a *billet doux* to Dr. Wroughtley, requesting him to take his coffee here, instead of at home, which will give me a quiet opportunity for explaining to him the commission with which we mean to honour him; for the Dean dines out, and our coffee will be taken *tête-à-tête*."

"I will go this instant," he replied; "only tell me, first, when I may be permitted to see her again!"

Mrs. Chilbert laughed, both at the pathos and the humility of this appeal, and the lovers looked at her as if they thought her very cruel and very hard-hearted. But she made her peace with them by telling Mr. Dorking that he would do well to delay his departure for a day or two.

These words had an effect that might be compared to the letting a very bright beam of sunshine suddenly enter a dark room. He seized his hat with gay alacrity, and looked like the very happiest man in the world, though in the very act of losing sight of all he wished to look upon.

"God bless you, for ever and for ever,

my dearest Mrs. Chilbert!" he exclaimed. "A day or two is exactly all I ask. Before those days are over, I feel confident that you will have settled everything for us, exactly in the best manner possible; and that when we part, it will not be without knowing, with something like certainty, when we are to meet again."

One fond and lingering look, one kiss upon the little hand, and he was gone.

It is not necessary to follow *mot-à-mot* the conversation which ensued between the friends during the little half-hour that followed. It can surprise no one that Miss Barbara's dinner hour was again forgotten, or that, even when it was at length remembered again by Judith, Mrs. Chilbert did not appear to deem it a matter of very great importance.

"Yes, I dare say she will be very angry," said she. "But angry she will be, and angry she must be, on weightier matters than that. I hope you do not really fear her, my sweet Judith? If you do, confess it honestly, and I will take you home myself, and breast the storm that must of necessity arise when she learns, as she must do *at once*, remember, that you are about to leave her house immediately."

"No," replied Judith, "I do not feel that I have any of that sort of fear which should make me shrink from meeting her alone. The interval which must intervene between the explanation on the subject of the returned letter and my final departure from her house will not be very agreeable, certainly, but the future, thanks to you, dearest, is so bright, that I do not care much about the present."

"That is precisely my own view of the case, my dear Judith, or I should not see you depart for the den of the dragon with so much philosophy as I feel about it at present. Of course you will not yourself undertake the task of informing her of your engagement to the gentleman whom she treated so cavalierly, nor of your intention of exchanging her protection for that of her sister. There will be a little rough work in this, and our good friend Dr. Wroughtley must perform it for us. He will not do it willingly, perhaps, for he is by nature a peaceable man; but he will do it well, and kindly too, if he does it at all. And now run away like a lapwing, dearest! and eat your dinner with what appetite you may."

Judith waited for no more, but, bestowing

an eloquently silent kiss upon her friend, obeyed her literally, and ran home like a lapwing.

CHAPTER XXXI.

MISS BARBARA was too fidgety, too nervous, when she met her niece in the dining-room, to be very angry at her being a little too late; on the contrary, indeed, she was rather particularly civil.

In truth, she was beginning to feel a little frightened at the energy of her own proceedings, though she had assured herself, at least a dozen times in the course of the morning, that she would do exactly the same thing over again under the same circumstances; and more than as many times did she repeat, in murmured accents of indignation and horror, "A child of fourteen! It is really too shocking!"

And it is probable that she might have succeeded in restoring herself to her wonted state of self-approving contentment by this view of the subject, had Dr. Wroughtley been totally ignorant of the affair. But the most poignant part of her uneasiness arose from the fear that he might discover after what manner she had kept her promise of consigning the letter he had seen *to its right owner*. She wished, yet dreaded, to see him, and was altogether in a much more fluttered state of spirits than her young companion, notwithstanding the all-important promise she had that morning given. But few things are more true than the common axiom that nothing is so tormenting as uncertainty; and such being the fact, the great discomfort of Miss Barbara is easily accounted for, the state of her mind being in a most remarkable degree uncertain.

Miss Barbara Jenkyns had lived for many years in a state of the most friendly and happy intimacy with Dr. Wroughtley, without having ever suffered herself to be tormented by any uncertainty at all. Everybody who knew Dr. Wroughtley declared that he was a confirmed, though most delightful, bachelor; and Miss Barbara believed what everybody said, and was tormented neither by hopes nor fears on the subject.

But then came what Miss Barbara considered as a most complete and entire change in her own position. And then, alas! followed quick upon this persuasion the unfortunate utterance of these ambiguous words, which at once overthrew all that structure of temperate feeling and maidenly composure

of spirit which had, for so many years, enabled her to live unscathed, though continually exposed to all the dangers of an intimacy with the individual whom she never scrupled to confess that she considered as the most fascinating man in the world.

Yet, in the midst of what must be allowed to have been a very distracted paroxysm of tender passion, the superior intellect of Miss Barbara taught her still to hold fast to something approaching common sense. Instead of foolishly flattering herself, as so very many unfortunate individuals of both sexes do, not only that she was sought, but sought for herself alone, she immediately concluded that Dr. Wroughtley was not likely, after living with her on the terms he had done for so many years without ever betraying any of the weakness of that terrible passion called love, at last to break through all bounds, as he had now done, without having some reason for it. And this reason she found in the change which had taken place in her income. Far from feeling hurt when this idea occurred to her, she only admired him the more for it.

"What a blessing would it be," thought she, "if all men were equally reasonable, equally considerate! Our union poor-houses would be no longer crammed with the miserable products of imprudent marriages! No; if all men were like Dr. Wroughtley, this world would be an earthly paradise!"

But although thus deeply philosophical, thus admirably reasonable in the endurance of wishes that she felt to be hopeless, it does not follow that Miss Barbara was to be insensible to the ecstasy of this un hoped-for Hope, when it came at last. Miss Barbara might fairly be considered as a model for spinster ladies, but, after all, she was not a spinster angel; and it certainly had been with a feeling of very womanly triumph that she welcomed the Doctor's approaches (as she fancied, poor lady!) to love-making. This is surely quite sufficient to account for her perturbed state of mind at this eventful period of her existence.

But the dinner passed, and the evening came; and the tea passed, and the night candles came, but no Dr. Wroughtley appeared.

As to Judith, the evening, silently grim as it was, wore itself away with vastly less tedium, as far as her feelings were concerned, than any *tête-à-tête* evening she had ever passed with her aunt Barbara.

Happily for her fingers they had the fabri-

cation of a purse to occupy them; and for her mind, it had enough in-door work to do, to prevent any danger of tedium from the absence of occupation from without.

So when ten o'clock came, she felt little or none of her usual rapture at hearing the hour strike, for she could think of Fredric Dorking, and London, and Mrs. Chilbert, almost as conveniently while working at Miss Barbara's twilight table, as when lying awake in bed.

But the morrow was destined to be an eventful day. It had been settled between Judith and Mrs. Chilbert, that Dr. Wroughtley was to be immediately summoned to the Deanery, in order to receive the important commission with which she meant to intrust him. He came with ready obedience to her message, and listened to all she had to tell with more interest than surprise. He really behaved admirably well throughout; for though, as the reader knows already, he disapproved Miss Barbara's proceedings as much as Mrs. Chilbert herself could do, he was perfectly true to his long-professed friendship for her, and pertinaciously persisted in declaring that he had no doubt in the world that she fancied she was doing very right.

"Well, well, dear Doctor, do not let us dispute any more about that," said Mrs. Chilbert, a little impatiently. "When people do exactly everything they ought not to do, I care very little whether they are more rogues or fools,—indeed, I am rather afraid that I like the rogues best. The question now before us is, whether you will do us the great kindness of being the negotiator between Judith Maitland and her aunt. I know that the task is not a pleasant one. But the present peace and future happiness of this dear girl greatly depend upon her removing from the protection of one of her aunts to the other, with as little fuss and fracas as possible; and no one in the world is so likely to manage the business peaceably as yourself."

"No, dear lady," replied the Doctor, shaking his head, "the task is not a pleasant one. But I will not shrink from being useful, if I can be so. Are you quite sure, however, that the fair Judith has the legal power of making this exchange? I thought that Mrs. Maitland had left a paper containing an expression of her wishes on the subject, and that Miss Barbara Jenkyns was to have the charge of her."

"Mrs. Maitland did leave such a paper, but it expressly leaves the choice with Judith as to which of her two maiden aunts she should reside with."

"That simplifies the matter greatly," replied the Doctor; "and I confess that, after what has passed, I think my good friend Miss Barbara has very little right to expect that she will be the favoured aunt. It is a great match, a very splendid match, that is offered to our young friend. A pretty certain coronet, I believe, and not less, certainly, than fourteen thousand a-year, between his own estates and those of his father. I cannot, for the life of me, comprehend what the good lady's motive could be for refusing it, and with such vehement symptoms of indignation too. The youth of the young lady, which she makes such a fuss about, by no means explains it, because it would have been so completely in her own power to have delayed the marriage. In short, her whole conduct on this point is to me a complete mystery."

"It is not so to me, Dr. Wroughtley," said Mrs. Chilbert, gravely.

"Then unless your discovery be a very profound secret, my dear lady, I do beseech you to explain it," he replied.

"Did it never occur to you, Dr. Wroughtley, that the allowance which Miss Jenkyns receives with her niece might be a reason for her wishing to retain her?" replied Mrs. Chilbert.

"No, upon my honour!" said he. "It never entered my head, I do assure you. Nevertheless, I am quite aware that the allowance is very considerable, and that my friend, Miss Barbara, is by no means rich enough to make it unimportant to her. But if the wish to retain this has really led her to refuse such a very desirable settlement for her niece, I must say that Miss Barbara has behaved extremely ill." And the good Doctor looked really distressed.

"If you can contrive to discover any other motive for her conduct, my good friend, I promise to give up my own theory on the subject," returned Mrs. Chilbert. "But let us not waste any more time in discussing her motives. What her conduct has been we all know, and it is this, and not her motives for it, which must regulate our proceedings."

She then explained to him exactly what the commission was which they wished him to undertake.

"In the first place, dear Doctor," she continued, enumerating the different parts of his

task upon her fingers; "in the first place you must give her to understand, that Mr. Dorking has made us acquainted with the insult he has received at her hands by the return of his unopened letter to Miss Maitland. In the second, you must inform her that the said Mr. Dorking, finding that his proposals would not be permitted to reach the young lady in what he conceived to be the most proper way, had found himself obliged to have recourse to a personal interview, which he has obtained *here*."

"Thirdly, we must request you to announce to her that Miss Maitland has accepted his proposal, on condition that he shall consent to wait till she is in her eighteenth year; and fourthly, and lastly, you must be pleased to make her comprehend that Miss Maitland, not approving the mode in which she has been treated, has already written to her aunt Elfreda, informing her of all that has happened, and requesting permission to take up her abode under her protection till the period fixed for her marriage shall arrive. And, moreover, my dear Doctor, you may add, if you like it, that, in order to obviate all difficulties as to Judith's journey to town, I have promised to escort her myself."

"Do you happen to have a little cherry-brandy, or any other comfortable cordial at hand, Mrs. Dean?" said Dr. Wroughtley, very demurely. "You certainly think highly of my courage, my good lady, or you would never send me to carry such a bundle of fire and faggot as this you have prepared for me."

"Yes, I do think very highly of your courage, or rather of the kindness which will inspire it," she replied. "Very seriously, Dr. Wroughtley, I am quite as much aware as you can be that the commission I have given you is neither easy nor pleasant. But what can we do for this poor dear child except what we now propose? Nevertheless, if you really wish to escape this disagreeable embassy, I will undertake it myself. But I think you would do it infinitely better than I should."

"I do not know about that, Mrs. Dean," said the Doctor, rising, "but I beg you to believe that my thinking the commission a disagreeable one, is not exactly the sort of reason that would lead me to charge you with it. I will in all my best obey you, madam, and you shall hear the result as soon as the interview is over."

And so saying he left her without waiting to receive her thanks, but finding consider-

able consolation from the thought, that if he was in danger of mortally offending one lady, he had a fair chance of very seriously obliging two.

CHAPTER XXXII.

WHEN Doctor Wroughtley said that the idea of performing the commission entrusted to him by Mrs. Chilbert frightened him, he was not jesting. He really did feel afraid of the vehemence of his old friend's anger, and had it not been for the little point of vantage of her having so shabbily faltered about her promise of "*delivering the letter to its right owner*," he might have felt more frightened still.

From the Deanery he went at once to the Jenkyns' mansion, and was at once shown into the lady's study, where he found her doing exactly nothing, though her open writing-desk was before her, and an open book lay upon it.

Her colour was considerably augmented by the entrance of the reverend gentleman, for though she did not think it very likely that he could have discovered what she had done with Mr. Dorking's inclosure, she was quite aware that, if he had, he would reprove her for it.

A second thought, however, brought to her heart the pleasant conviction that he could not keep away, and it was therefore with rather a tender smile that she pointed to his accustomed chair on the hearth-rug.

But Doctor Wroughtley was too much occupied by the grave business he had in hand to notice either the blush or the smile; he obeyed the action of her hand, however, and placed himself in the arm chair; but, alas! he did not take up the poker to stir the fire, which he had so long been used to consider almost like his own.

Miss Barbara sighed. But neither did he notice that. He had a walking-stick in his hand, as usual, but instead of resting it, with his shovel hat upon the top of it, in the recess of the window, as a sort of signal that he was going to make a good comfortable gossiping visit, he now kept the said stick in hand, and placing his hat on the top of it, he crossed his hands over its crown, as if not only to keep it in its place, but to show that he was ready to go away at a moment's warning.

"It is rather a cold morning, isn't it, Doctor?" said Miss Barbara, in the kindest voice imaginable.

"I hardly know, Miss Barbara," he re-

plied, "for I have not been thinking about the matter. I have got rather a particular question to ask you, Miss Jenkyns; I want you to tell me, if you please, what you did with that letter which Mr. Frederic Dorking inclosed to you for Miss Maitland?"

The spirit of Miss Barbara Jenkyns was painfully disturbed by this very particularly plain question. To have given as plain and explicit an answer would have been extremely disagreeable to her, and therefore, notwithstanding all her softer feelings towards the questioner, she assumed the look and accent of indignant displeasure.

"Upon my word, Dr. Wroughtley, your manner of speaking to me is very extraordinary. I don't know any reason, sir, whatever, which should induce me to answer a question so very rudely put."

"I beg your pardon, my dear lady, ten thousand times over, if I have said any thing rude to you. I do assure you I did not mean it. But you would have real cause to complain of me were I, after so many years of friendly and intimate acquaintance, to beat about the bush when I have something really important to say to you, instead of coming to the point at once. However, I was wrong, Miss Barbara, very wrong in putting such a question to you, because it was no question at all; for I knew all about it better than you could tell me, without troubling you with any questions whatever. You sent that letter back to Mr. Dorking, Miss Barbara, instead of giving it, as I told you, to the person for whom it was intended, and I am sorry to tell you that you have got yourself into a sad scrape by it."

"I don't understand you, sir," returned Miss Barbara, still endeavouring to look dignified and undismayed. "You seem to forget, sir, that I am the lawful guardian of the young child that this impertinent young man chooses to address in so very improper a manner."

"No, my dear lady, you are not her guardian. She is not your ward, but the Chancellor's. But you see there has been nothing but mistakes in this business from beginning to end,—I mean on your side, my good friend,—for Mr. Frederic Dorking appears to have made no mistake at all when he stated himself to have been in love with your niece. Neither did he make any mistake in thinking that a coronet, and fourteen thousand a-year, offered by a young man of good family and most perfectly unexceptionable charac-

ter, deserved to be received with more civility."

"No offer of marriage made to a child of fourteen ought to be received with civility," returned Miss Barbara, with a look which was intended to express a vast deal of conscious virtue of all kinds.

"There now, Miss Barbara, you come exactly to another of your mistakes. What put it into your head that your niece was only fourteen? I can neither guess nor understand this, for everybody that looks at her takes her to be older, instead of younger than she really is; but the real truth is that she is in her seventeenth year, Miss Barbara, having completed her sixteenth year on the twenty-second of the month before last."

Miss Barbara opened her eyes to a most prodigious size, and looked very much as if she were going to contradict him; but the Doctor gave her no opportunity, for, most heartily anxious to get to the end of his task, he paused not even to take breath. "I don't mean to say," he continued, "that sixteen is not too early an age; but youth, my dear Miss Barbara, is an obstacle that melts away with great and very certain facility, and cannot, therefore, be considered as a reasonable cause for refusing such an offer as that of Mr. Frederic Dorking. However, be this as it may, he has now made his proposals to the young lady herself, and she has accepted them, on the condition that he shall wait till she has entered her eighteenth year, when, if the Chancellor makes no objection, she has promised to marry him."

Miss Barbara's dismay at this overthrow of all her hopes was very great, but her anger was greater. She felt convinced that there was a most iniquitous plot arranged for the purpose of inspiring the quiet little Judith with a spirit of rebellion to her authority, and she doubted not,—for how could she doubt it?—that Dr. Wroughtley was one of the conspirators! Her anger, her indignation, her absolute rage at this discovery, knew no bounds. But the very excess of those terrible feelings robbed her of all power of expressing them, and taking advantage of her silence, the cause of which he completely misinterpreted, the unconscious Dr. Wroughtley went on.

"You are very injudicious, to say the least of it, Miss Barbara, in taking so violent and so uncivil a course, and the consequences, the immediate consequences I mean, are such

as I fear will be any thing but agreeable to you. I am just come from the Deanery, and it has been very reluctantly, my good friend, I do assure you, that I have complied with Mrs. Chilbert's wish in coming here to acquaint you with the measures that have been resolved upon between that lady and your niece. Miss Judith, I am sorry to say, is greatly wounded by the manner in which you thought fit to act, respecting the letter addressed to her, and which was confided to your care; so much so, indeed, that, as I understand, for I have not seen the young lady myself, she has announced her intention of immediately withdrawing herself from your protection, and placing herself under that of her aunt Elfreda."

Miss Barbara, very unadvisedly, clenched her fist in a manner unmistakably hostile, as she suddenly extended her arm towards Dr. Wroughtley, and exclaimed,

"I defy her to do it! She is under my protection by the order of the Lord Chancellor!"

Dr. Wroughtley, who felt that he had performed the worst part of the truly disagreeable task he had undertaken, either from the lightness of heart produced by this pleasant idea, or from the natural mirthfulness of his temper, which rendered him particularly prone to laugh at what was comical, burst into a very genuine and hearty fit of laughter on seeing Miss Barbara's fist advance in so warlike a manner towards him; and suddenly rising from his chair, he gaily caught her hand in his, exclaiming, "You are not going to box my ears, old friend, are you?"

Cold water thrown upon red-hot iron produces a grim blackness and a frightful hissing noise, and the effect of Dr. Wroughtley's pleasantry upon the wrathful Miss Barbara might be not unaptly compared to it; only that "the innocent iron," notwithstanding its black looks and its ugly hissing, could not have half the propensity to do mischief which swelled in the heart of Miss Barbara at that unfortunate moment.

A man of a different temperament might, perhaps, have guessed a little what was going on within the lady's bosom when he saw her face become so very red, and the expression of her grey eyes so very fierce; but Dr. Wroughtley had never been in a passion in his life, not even upon receiving the mandate to quit his kennel and his curacy, and though he now looked in the face of his old acquaintance very steadily, he did it with so little

speculation, that he saw nothing but what was comical in it. And again he laughed, at the same time shaking her hand as vehemently as if it had been that of some fox-hunting old friend, whom he had not met for many years.

But both the tragedy and the comedy of the scene were too vehement to last long; Miss Barbara became quite exhausted in her struggles to liberate her hand, and burst into tears. Dr. Wroughtley, too, got tired of holding it, and having released her, and ceased laughing, he prepared to depart, saying, with the most innocent unconsciousness of the violent anger he had excited, "Good-bye, Miss Barbara! Cheer up your spirits, my good friend!—You certainly were not acting with your usual good sense when you sent back the young gentleman's letter; but that will all pass by and be forgotten when your niece has rewarded his tender passion with her hand, notwithstanding. But take my advice this time, and don't attempt to make any foolish opposition to the young lady's going to London; for she has, by the will of her late mother, the full power of choosing which ever maiden aunt she prefers as her hostess."

Having said this, he hastened out of the room, not a little delighted that the visit was over, and well pleased, too, now that it was past, at remembering that he had been a useful agent, aider, and abetter in so very agreeable an affair as the marriage of such a sweet interesting young creature as Judith with a person so every way deserving her.

This was the state of mind of Dr. Wroughtley as he left the presence of Miss Barbara, and it is very easy both to describe and imagine it. But it is far otherwise respecting the condition of Miss Barbara.

We have never seen her hitherto in any state of mind that may not be considered as very natural and very common in ladies of that particular description under similar circumstances.

But far different was the case now. Though she was still a maiden lady, although she might have preferred being married, and though she had found herself obliged to pay a rent for her house when she would have preferred living in it rent-free, she had nevertheless, on the whole, enjoyed a very tranquil and prosperous existence. Through the greater part of this existence (since she arrived at years of discretion, for Westhampton had not been possessed of him before) Dr.

Wroughtley had been a very important, perhaps the most important, feature.

It has been already stated, and with perfect veracity, that let the secret feelings of Miss Barbara Jenkyns for Dr. Wroughtley have been what they would, she had for many many years protected herself by her own good sense and discreet forbearance from the folly of falling *absolutely* in love with him.

But, unhappy lady! the fatal moment came at last, and a few unmeaning words lightly spoken and, unfortunately, misunderstood, plunged her at once into the desperate folly against which she had for so many years struggled with such happy success!

The ingenious manner, too, in which she had contrived to reconcile his present yielding to the powerful passion which subdues both gods and men, with his long resistance to it, confirmed her in her most pernicious blunder, and led her to believe that instead of there being any thing improbable in his suddenly conceived intention of marrying her, it was, on the contrary, not only the most rational, but the most natural thing possible. If all this be freshly kept in remembrance, together with the alarming fact that the temperament of Miss Barbara Jenkyns was not of the same gentle nature as that of the amiable Doctor of Divinity upon whom she had at length bestowed her heart, some idea may perhaps be conceived of the state of mind in which this unfortunate lady was left at the departure of Dr. Wroughtley from her study.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE rage of poor Miss Barbara, however, was of little avail. Dr. Wroughtley had no idea of its vehemence. Judith guessed at it, partly by her own sagacity and partly by the report of Susan; but, to say truth, she heeded it not. And as to Mrs. Chilbert, it is to be feared that she might have been more amused than pained could she have been made acquainted with the exact condition of her neighbour's heart and soul. But, as it was, she thought little and cared still less about it. She had never thought Miss Barbara a fitting chaperon for her young friend, and her conduct in regard to Mr. Dorking had fully justified her in this opinion; so that she very generously rejoiced at her being removed, although it would rob herself of a pleasure which she had very keenly enjoyed.

Judith, naturally enough, dreaded her first interview with Miss Barbara after Dr.

Wroughtley should have made her comprehend the present state of affairs ; and in order to be able to meet her with the assurance that everything was finally settled for her removal, she employed the time occupied by Dr. Wroughtley's explanation in writing the following letter to her aunt Elfreda.

"My dear aunt Elfreda,—You may be a good deal surprised, but I hope you will not be very much displeased, when I tell you that I wish immediately to avail myself of my dear kind mamma's permission to reside either with you or my aunt Barbara, and to take up my abode with you. My reasons for this I will explain when we meet, and I flatter myself that you will then think that I have not acted improperly. I do assure you, my dear aunt, that it is my wish to behave properly, and not to be troublesome to anybody if I can help it. But very strange things have happened here, and I might, perhaps, be afraid that they would be misrepresented to you, had I not the great good fortune of enjoying the affection and the advice of Mrs. Chilbert, with whom I believe you are well acquainted. It is a great comfort to me that I am able to tell you this, and to assure you that I have done nothing without her sanction and advice. She has most kindly promised to accompany me herself to London, and to place me in your hands, which will, I am sure, be the most satisfactory proof you could receive of my having done nothing which should make you reluctant to receive me.

"Believe me, dear aunt,

"Your dutiful and affectionate niece,
"JUDITH MAITLAND."

Finding, when she had written this epistle, that it still wanted more than an hour of her aunt Barbara's dinner-hour, Judith determined to submit it to Mrs. Chilbert before she put it in the post, both because she rather doubted her own judgment as to the propriety of boasting of Mrs. Chilbert's friendship, and also because she did not like to state that lady's approval of her conduct without making her aware that she had done so.

"Ah ! my Judith !" exclaimed the Dean's lady on seeing her young friend enter. "You are come exactly at the right moment to learn the result of my letter to Rome !"

"You have received an answer !" cried Judith, eagerly. "How very, very lucky that it should have arrived before my departure ! And what is the result, dearest Mrs.

Chilbert ? Have you any intelligence for me ?"

"No, my dear love, I have not," replied her friend. "All my correspondent has been able to learn is, that Mr. Worthington and his mother have left Rome. But do not look so sadly vexed and disappointed, my sweet Judith. Surely this cannot signify so very much now !"

"Oh ! do not say that !" cried Judith, with her cheeks the colour of the crimson rose, and her eyes filled with tears. "Oh ! do not say that it is of no consequence now ! I know that my aunt Barbara will say I have behaved very ill in many ways, and particularly in all that has happened about Mr. Dorking. But the only thing for which my conscience reproaches me is what you say does not signify."

"Well, dearest, do not cry about it so piteously, and I will promise not to say so again. All I meant was, Judith, that nothing signified at this particular moment but the great affair of getting you well out of this troublesome old lady's hands, without committing ourselves by doing any thing that was outrageously contrary to etiquette ; because that, my dear child, would bring us all into disgrace."

"Forgive me, dearest Mrs. Chilbert !" returned Judith. "I am afraid that I must be a very selfish person, for I positively feel at this moment as if I did not much care for any body or any thing but my poor aunt Worthington !"

"But how is that being selfish, Judith ?" said Mrs. Chilbert, laughing, yet looking at her at the same time with great affection. "I don't see how forgetting all your own affairs at this very important moment, and thinking of nothing but your aunt Worthington, whom you never saw in your life, can be called selfish."

"Oh, yes ! it is selfish," replied Judith, while the tears still testified the sincerity of her emotion, "because, while you and Mr. Dorking, and good kind Dr. Wroughtley, who has had to bear all aunt Barbara's anger to-day, while you are all so very, very kindly occupied about me, I really do feel as if it was a sin for me to feel happy about any thing while the last wishes of my poor dear mamma about her sister Penelope are forgotten. And it must be selfish in me to care so very much about what nobody can feel but myself, when you are all taking so much trouble about me."

"I see no selfishness, dear love, but I do see a little want of wisdom in your suffering any thing to divide your attention at this moment with the important business before us," said Mrs. Chilbert. "When you are quietly settled with your aunt Elfreda in London, I have no doubt that you will meet with some one or other who will be able to assist you in the search that you are so dutifully anxious to make. But, upon my word, at this moment I do not think it wise or useful, in any way, to talk or think any more about it. Have you written to your aunt Elfreda, my dear?"

Judith answered in the affirmative, and presented her letter for inspection, stating her reasons for wishing that Mrs. Chilbert should see it before it was consigned to the post.

"What a 'transparent-hearted' little creature you are, Judith!" replied her friend, after glancing her eye over the letter. "I must be a cross creature for quarrelling with you for throwing open your heart to me on one thing, when I love you so much for doing it on another. Nothing can be better than your letter; seal it at once, dear, and I will send it to the post for you."

This was immediately done, and the few moments which remained, before it was absolutely necessary for the poor girl to return to the little-ease of her dreaded aunt Barbara's presence, were judiciously employed by Mrs. Chilbert in dwelling upon the pleasure she should feel at delivering her from the clutches of her dragon, and conveying her to all the happy novelties of a first visit to London.

"But what shall I do for a Mrs. Chilbert?" said Judith, shaking her head.

"I don't wish you to find any more Mrs. Chilberts, Judith; we are only a variety of the genus tyrant. But now I have begun with you, it is quite as well that I should go on; and in exactly two months from this time, I have the Dean's word for it that I shall be in London myself; and then I shall take you again into my own hands, and renew my favourite practice of making you do exactly what I bid you."

Judith's joy at this announcement was expressed as vividly as it was felt.

"And now, then, I think I can face aunt Barbara without even a shudder," said she; "I feel as bold as a lion! But do not keep me, or my courage will all evaporate, and I shall appear before her trembling like a silly

sheep, which is a condition whereunto I do not intend that she shall see me reduced."

But, with all her boasting, poor little Judith did very literally tremble as, after preparing herself for the dismal dinner-table, she crept slowly down the stairs to take her place at it.

For a moment it was certainly a relief to her to be told by William, when about to enter the dining-room door, that she must please not to mind dining by herself, as his Missis was poorly like, and did not mean to come out of her room.

For a moment this announcement unquestionably produced a feeling of relief; but in the next, the poor girl began to feel frightened at her absence. "What did it mean? Was it intended as an expression of unspeakable anger? And what was likely to happen next?"

By degrees, however, Judith, young as she was, began to arrange her ideas, and to take a very rational view of her own situation. She felt that at that particular moment she was certainly very dismally alone, and tears again filled her eyes as she thought of father, mother, brother, and sister, all so lately possessed, and now for ever lost!

But her thoughts did not stop there. The great, the wonderfully great good fortune which had given the friendship of such a woman as Mrs. Chilbert, and the love of such a man as Frederic Dorking, to such a young half-educated creature as herself, appeared to her, as it ought to have done, as being a blessing far greater than she had any right to hope for, and she blessed Heaven for its goodness to her.

And then gayer lighter meditations followed, and the thoughts of leaving West-hampton and her aunt Barbara made her heart beat with hope and happiness.

Had she not known that Mrs. Chilbert was going out to dinner in the Close, it is probable that she would have run away from herself in order to chat with her; but it was better for her as it was, for before the cathedral clock, by striking ten, gave her notice that she was to put down her purse and take up her bed-candle, a long train of useful self-improving thoughts had passed through her young heart and head. She remembered that where much was given, much would be required. She made good resolutions, and prayed for power to keep them. And when she laid her head upon her pillow that night, she felt as if she were considerably more than

a day older than when she had quitted it in the morning.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

To the best of young Judith's judgment, it appeared to her more proper, after all that had happened, and was about to happen, that she should avoid any interview with her aunt Barbara till that lady herself thought proper to seek it. But she was very much pleased to remember, as she thus decided, that the habit, which had now been long established, of her going every morning to the Deanery for musical practice, enabled her to seek her friend there now, without putting either Mrs. Chilbert or herself under the imputation of caballing against lawful authority.

It is so easy to imagine all that passed at the Deanery during that and the following days, that it is quite needless to recapitulate it all, much in detail.

The answer from Miss Elfreda came exactly at the hour it was expected, and contained the kind and affectionate welcome that had been anticipated.

Mr. Dorking dined at the Deanery on both the days that intervened before the departure of Mrs. Chilbert and Judith for London; but he was positively forbidden to take his place in the same train, or even on the same day that the two ladies left Westhampton.

The good Dean approved this, as well as all their other regulations, and cheered the heart of the young heiress by telling her that he knew the impatient temper of his lady too well to attempt delaying their promised visit to London for above two months. Dr. Wroughtley had, as he well deserved, his share in these pleasant hope-inspiring farewells; and in answer to Mr. Dorking's assurance that there was no man whom he should be more happy to receive both in town and country, as soon as the establishments he was about to arrange in both should be completed, declared that he could imagine no possible invitation that it would give him more pleasure to accept.

After stating these facts, nothing more remains to be told at present respecting Judith Maitland's adventures at Westhampton, and I may therefore announce her safe arrival at her aunt Elfreda's lodgings in Green Street.

It was not till after considerable meditation on the subject, that Mrs. Chilbert at length decided that she would not prolong her chaperonship of her young fellow-traveller beyond the house-door of her aunt El-

freda's lodgings. There were few things that could have served, or even pleased Judith, which her friend Mrs. Chilbert would have shrunk from performing; but she very decidedly felt that she had *rather not* meet the first outbreak of Miss Elfreda's ardent curiosity respecting all the wonderful events that had occurred at Westhampton, and it was therefore at the above-mentioned house-door that the two friends parted, but not without a promise from Mrs. Chilbert that she would pay her compliments to Miss Elfreda on the morrow.

All this was settled before the carriage which brought them from the railroad station arrived at Miss Elfreda's door; and if it had not, all the precautions of the Dean's lady would have been in vain, for Miss Elfreda, who had been living for the last hour at the drawing-room window, no sooner saw the vehicle stop than she rushed to the stairs, and had reached the bottom just as Judith and a few of her packages entered.

But Mrs. Chilbert, having made the intelligent servant who accompanied her comprehend that she did not wish to be delayed, made her retreat in perfect safety while Miss Elfreda was engaged in embracing her niece.

When she had concluded the first long hug, and, looking up, perceived that the Dean's lady was actually gone, and the house door closed, she uttered an exclamation expressive of something like despair; however, Judith succeeded in calming her, by the assurance that Mrs. Chilbert would call upon her on the morrow. This, and the recollection of all she had to hear, and all she had to say, restored her to a tolerable state of composure, and with one arm employed in carrying a carpet bag, and the other thrown round the waist of her fondly-welcomed niece, she mounted the stairs again in the very happiest temper and condition of mind imaginable. But much as she had to hear, and ardently as she longed to hear it, she could with difficulty restrain her personal feelings sufficiently to enable her to listen to it.

Her vehement and not unnatural displeasure against her sister Barbara, from the trick she had attempted to play her respecting her share in the guardianship of Judith, was by no means subsided; and she felt perhaps a deeper interest concerning the conduct which had now driven the young Judith to leave her, and which she was quite prepared to find "abominable," than for any other possible part of Judith's expected narrative.

The intelligence she was so eager to gain was, therefore, for a considerable time impeded by the multitude of her own questionings and exclamations.

She never had, she said, no, never in her life, heard of any thing one half so shameful as the conduct of her sister Barbara. Every thing was completely of a piece from beginning to end! It was disgraceful! Perfectly disgraceful! She was absolutely ashamed to listen to it. "But pray, my dear," she suddenly burst forth, "where is your maid? and where is your own footman? Have you not brought them up to town with you? Surely you have not been travelling without your own people," she added, with a little affected astonishment.

"My own maid? and my own footman?" said Judith, laughing. "What made you think that I had a maid and a footman, aunt?"

"You don't mean to tell me, my dear, that you have not had your own servants to wait upon you?" returned Miss Elfreda, lifting up her hands and eyes in the most indignant astonishment.

"No, indeed, aunt," replied Judith, "I have had no servants to wait upon me, except those of aunt Barbara. I never thought of such a thing myself, and I don't suppose that aunt Barbara did either. She certainly never mentioned it to me in any way."

"Then more shame for her, Judith! This is really and truly worse than I could have believed possible! No servants! and the Chancellor making an allowance of six hundred a-year! Oh! Judith, Judith! This is very bad indeed. You have been used shamefully, my poor child,—most shamefully! I must hire a maid for you instantly, positively without an hour's delay. And yet it is necessary to be so very particular in London! I will get the 'Times,' and read every advertisement before I sleep. And a footman, too; I must see about a footman immediately. Not even to bring a maid with you! It is too bad to talk about. Oh! too bad, a great deal. No wonder that you did not stay with her! The only wonder is that you staid so long. I understand perfectly well now, my dear, why you left her."

Judith coloured a good deal, and felt very considerably embarrassed as she listened to all this, conscious that the real cause of her change of domicile was of so very different, and so much more important, a character. It was not at last without considerable difficulty

that Judith could keep her indignant partisan silent long enough to make her understand, that she would not have considered any thing which merely affected her personal convenience as a sufficient cause for taking so decided a step as leaving her aunt Barbara's house, when she had covenanted to remain with her two months longer.

"Then what was the real reason of your coming away, my darling?" exclaimed Miss Elfreda, staring at her with eyes distended to an unusual size by interest and curiosity. "I am quite sure," she added, "that you cannot possibly have done any thing that you ought not to have done, because our charming Mrs. Dean would have cut her white hands off, rather than have sanctioned your evasion by coming up with you, if any thing of that sort had happened. Tell me, then, at once, my sweet Judith, for you have contrived, positively, if I may be permitted the use of our dear Hamlet's words, 'to stretch my thoughts beyond the reaches of my soul!'"

Judith smiled at her sublimity of expression, and immediately roused all the courage within her to the making a fair statement of her youthful love, and the obstacles which Miss Barbara had thrown in the way of it.

She did not think it necessary, indeed, to state that she thought Mr. Frederic Dorking the handsomest, the most accomplished, the most fascinating, and, beyond all reach of comparison, the most adorable person in the world. These particular opinions respecting the gentleman she had promised to marry she deemed it more discreet to keep to herself; but, with this exception, her communications were tolerably confidential.

Miss Elfreda listened with a solemn stillness that was the more remarkable, because it was so far unlike the ordinary tone of her character and manner; but, in fact, she really was a good deal startled at learning that a little girl, the announcement of whose birth she seemed to remember so very freshly, was engaged to be married.

And this is an effect which may be often observed in maiden aunts who are still a little on the sunny side of fifty. Nevertheless, her feelings were far from being of the same indignant nature as those of her elder sister, and, as she had happily heard the name of Dorking as among the most brilliant of the untitled aristocracy, she required but a very few minutes to bring her from a state of amazement to one of great and triumphant satisfaction.

"I hope, aunt Elfreda," said Judith, after pausing for a minute or two at the conclusion of her narrative, I hope you agree with Mr. Dorking and Mrs. Chilbert in thinking that, after such a marked affront as returning a letter to him unopened, it would have been improper for him to make any farther attempt to become acquainted with my aunt Barbara, and, therefore, that I must either have made up my mind to reject him at once, or else to withdraw myself immediately from her protection."

"Withdraw yourself!" she exclaimed, "Upon my honour, my dear child, I doubt if you ought to have remained a single hour in her house, after you were made acquainted with the fact. And this is her way of proving to you, to me, and to the whole world, that because she is the eldest, she is also the most fitting person to have the charge of you! You don't know yet, I believe, all the lengths she went to prevent your ever being able to seek a refuge with me! You may thank your poor dear mother for her cautious kindness in making you copy that letter. She burnt the letter, my dear, and, had there been no copy of it, you must have probably waited till you were twenty-one years old, my poor Judith, before you could have been emancipated from her. But it's all alike! Perhaps you don't know that she wanted me to give up my share of the house for nothing? Miss Barbara thinks herself very sharp-witted, and a vast deal cleverer than any one else in the family, but she lets the cloven-foot peep out too easily. I dare say, if we were to listen to her, she would try to persuade us that her atrocious behaviour to Mr. Dorking arose solely from her decided aversion to matrimony in general, and that she was performing the part of a tender relative in guarding you from the threatened danger. But no, Judith. She does not think any such thing, and it would be only a contemptible affectation on my part if I pretended to be ignorant of her real motives. There is no use in mincing the matter, disgraceful as it is to avow the truth, or rather disgraceful as it is to have such a truth to avow; your aunt Barbara's real motive throughout the whole of this extraordinary transaction is, that she may keep you unmarried, Judith Maitland, for the sake of the allowance you bring with you!"

Poor Judith blushed with a very painful feeling of shame at hearing this suspicion so very broadly stated, though certainly it did not come upon her now for the first time, as it

had been pretty intelligibly alluded to by Mrs. Chilbert.

She said not a word in reply; and this silence avowed her belief in the truth of the statement with sufficient clearness to prevent Miss Elfreda from dwelling any longer on the theme; she only nodded her head as she looked rather steadily in the face of her niece, and said, "Yes, yes, my dear. Your looks speak exactly the truth. It is too plain to be pleasant; so we will talk no more about it. We shall have pleasanter things to think of, shan't we?"

Judith eagerly expressed her accordance with this opinion, and then, partly by way of effectually changing the subject, and partly from the faint hope of learning what she so greatly wished to know, she told her aunt of all the useless efforts she had made to discover the present residence of her aunt Worthington, and asked if she could give any clue by which further inquiries could be made.

Never was there a more sudden and disagreeable change in the expression of a countenance than that exhibited by Miss Elfreda Jenkyns on hearing this question. It was like the sudden extinction of gas-lights in a theatre; but, in order fully to comprehend this, the reader must be told that, notwithstanding all her manifold absurdities in the way of literary and scientific pretension, Miss Elfreda Jenkyns had, ever since her arrival in London, displayed very considerable adroitness in the manner in which she had pushed herself on, and on, and on, till she really had contrived to get into a very good circle of acquaintance, and one in which the Worthington connexion might be fatal. Nothing, perhaps, helps this sort of business more than the adopting some particular line, in which those who take the lead find it convenient, and indeed necessary, to obtain a large train of those whose destiny it is not to lead, but to follow. Many gentlemen, and more ladies, who love and patronise art, whether in music, painting, or sculpture, find it necessary, if their object be the making themselves influential patrons and patronesses, to admit a vast many people to their personal acquaintance, who would never have enjoyed the honour were not their bank notes and sovereigns exceedingly useful, and very easily brought under command by this means.

Even "science divine" is not exempt from the human *needcessities* which render this sort of patronage of very sadly great utility;

and many a lecturer, who stands up before us with more than the dignity of an earth-born Privy Councillor, giving an insight into the hidden arcana of the universe, would be fain to hide his honoured head for want of a hat to put on it, were there no enlightened and bustling fine ladies to sell his tickets for him.

Miss Elfreda Jenkyns found all this out with wonderful quickness and perspicuity, and that she had some talent was very decidedly shown by the steady perseverance with which she contrived to take tickets, and costly tickets too, whenever she found that the doing so would assist her object, even if her breakfasts and dinners suffered thereby.

The farther she went, and the more she succeeded in this object, the dearer it became to her, not only from the positive pleasure it brought with it, though that was much, but also from the constant gratification of feeling that she had done that for herself which so many people pass their lives in endeavouring to get others to do for them, and often in vain.

The astonishment and admiration which this success occasioned to Miss Tollbridge too, and which was constantly and vehemently expressed, was another means of keeping up Miss Elfreda's intense interest in the business. She had taken care, from the very first, to make this rather humble friend understand that she was never to be *taken*, a law, the severity of which Miss Elfreda condescended to soften by occasionally observing that she really was not herself in a sufficiently high situation of life to attempt bringing any one forward in society, that she lamented the impossibility of doing so, etc., etc., to all which of course Miss Tollbridge listened with submissive acquiescence, feeling that if she did not, she might, in the vain pursuit of one object, endanger the loss of another, and that other, perhaps, more important still; for Miss Elfreda Jenkyns having, by considerable skill, more perseverance, and not a little good luck, got herself pretty nearly into the position which she had rather dreamed of than hoped for during the meditations which for years had occupied her spirit at West-hampton, felt herself called upon to patronise the friend whose companionship had formerly been so consolatory to her; and this patronage was now afforded in the shape of very frequent little accidental dinners, to which, without ceremony, poor Miss Tollbridge was almost always welcome when she happened

to come in (which was rather often) a short half hour, perhaps, before the well-known time of Miss Elfreda's principal repast.

Both the ladies being much too philosophical to drink anything but water, for Miss Elfreda's success had not gone the length of making her a dinner guest among her distinguished friends, the cost of such hospitality was not much, and, being greatly less important to the giver than to the receiver, was really a source of gratification to both.

Such being the position of Miss Elfreda, it is easy enough to conceive that the hearing of such a matrimonial connexion as that now proposed to her niece was like seeing a new and brilliant career opening before herself, in which she should have to perform a part of great importance, and that not by sufferance but by right.

From the moment she became acquainted with the facts which Judith had, of course, been really obliged to relate in order to explain the change of residence, Miss Elfreda's admiration and love for her knew no bounds.

The advantages of the very handsome allowance she was to receive with her were, in her estimation, absolutely not worth thinking of in comparison to that of being aunt to a peeress, with a revenue, at the very least, of fourteen thousand a-year.

She really looked at the unconscious little girl, as she thought of all this, with feelings very nearly approaching adoration, and might in this way have done her still but half-formed character very great injury, had Judith been sufficiently at leisure to observe and appreciate the influence she had obtained.

But fortunately this was not the case, for she was still so merely a child in many respects, that not even her tender devotion to her absent lover could prevent her being too much excited and amused by the multitude of new and striking objects by which she was surrounded to leave her any leisure to speculate upon the feelings of her "good-natured aunt Elfreda."

The stay of her kind friend Mrs. Chilbert in London did not, on this occasion, exceed a few hours, for such had been the condition upon which she had obtained the indulgent Dean's permission to perform the really important service of becoming travelling chaperon to her young friend. And when she was gone, Judith acceded, with a readiness more accordant with her age, perhaps, than

with the sober dignity of her position as an engaged woman, to all the sight-seeing projects that her devoted aunt proposed to her.

The delight of Miss Elfreda, upon discovering that she had the power of amusing her precious young niece, notwithstanding the absence of her lover, was great indeed.

Frederic Dorking had very properly betaken himself to the residence of his parents for the purpose of informing them of the important step he had taken, and his first letter to his lovely bride elect conveyed to her the agreeable intelligence that his parents were perfectly satisfied with his choice in all that respected her fortune and position in life; for the name and reputation of her distinguished father were well known to them, and his mother, with her own hand, added a very amiable postscript, assuring the chosen of her dear Frederic's heart that she looked forward to the making her personal acquaintance as to one of the happiest moments of her life, for that she knew the fastidious delicacy and refinement of his taste too well to feel the least doubt that the lady he so passionately wished to make his wife would prove exactly all she should most wish to welcome as a daughter.

This charming letter made Judith feel very happy, even though it conveyed the any thing but welcome intelligence that her lover would not be in London for some weeks; the only condition appended to the consent to his wishes, which had been so freely accorded, being, that Frederic should remain with them till they could all come to town together, which could not be till the middle of the following month, in consequence of workmen being in possession of their London mansion at the present moment.

CHAPTER XXXV.

JUDITH'S first feeling at learning that Frederic Dorking would not arrive for several weeks was very painful, and the more so because there was nobody to whom she could express it. Had Mrs. Chilbert been with her, the pleasure of talking of him might in some degree have atoned for the pain of not seeing him. But talking about him to poor dear aunt Elfreda would have been really too ridiculous; and so poor little Judith actually crept up to her own room, and, locking herself in, indulged for a few minutes with weeping in secret.

Nevertheless, it was this poor dear aunt

Elfreda who hit upon a source of consolation which, after a little time, proved wonderfully effectual.

"You look pale, my sweet love," said the affectionate lady, gazing anxiously at her, when, upon the entrance of a housemaid, she was driven from the shelter of her bed-room, and obliged to return to the drawing-room. "We must take a drive, Judith! Nothing will do you so much good. Besides, my dear, you must positively buy a new bonnet. I shall take you at once to Lady Longword's milliner. I don't often go to her myself, because I can't afford it; but you, darling, can afford any thing, and every thing, and therefore it is to Madame Gerond's that we will go."

"Not to-day, please, dear aunt. I don't feel as if I cared about bonnets this morning. Another day I shall like to go very much, I dare say, but I am sure I shall not find any thing pretty to-day."

Miss Elfreda laughed very good-humouredly.

"Well, well! you are born to be a pet, and to have your own way, so our bonnet business shall be postponed. But will you let me say one little word of real business to you, Judith? I would not bother you for the world, darling, if I could help it, and I will say it all in as few words as possible."

"Upon my word, aunt Elfreda, I am afraid you will spoil me," replied Judith, leaving her chair, and seating herself close beside her aunt. "Say as much business as you like, and you shall see that I will listen to you as gravely as if I were a lawyer."

"You don't look at all like a lawyer, my dear, but you look very like an angel, and I must give you a kiss," was the fond reply. "But what I have to say is real business, Judith. You cannot understand as yet, but you will by and by, how perfectly impossible it is for a young lady like you to live in London without a carriage. Even if I did not think it improper, I am sure Mr. Frederic Dorking would, as well as his father and mother; so, in short, it cannot be thought of."

"Well, dear aunt, don't think of it, then. Buy me a carriage, if you like it, and we will drive about in it together," said Judith, gaily.

"No, sweetest! I must not buy you a carriage, and I will tell you the reason why. You are to be married to Mr. Frederic Dorking in one year from the present time, and then, of course, you will have new carriages, and all that sort of thing, you know; we all under-

stand that. And then, my pretty one, think what a loss it would be to have a carriage upon your hands."

"What are we to do, then?" returned Judith, laughing. "I must have a carriage, and I must not have a carriage. How is it to be managed?"

"Why, my dear, you must hire a carriage. Not a trumpery hiring by the day, or the month, or any thing of that kind, but for the season, at the very least for the season. Do you understand me, dearest?"

"I understand exactly enough to be very sure that whatever you do will be right," replied Judith; "and it will be very kind of you, if you will manage every thing for me in the way you think best."

This explanation was perfectly satisfactory to both parties, and in justice to Miss Elfreda it is but fair to state, that the only use she made of this unlimited permission to arrange every thing her own way, was to put every thing in her little household upon a perfectly proper and commodious footing for the accommodation of her niece, running into no unnecessary extravagance, yet surrounding her with what was suitable to her fortune and future prospects.

It was not this very proper and necessary explanation, however, which furnished the consolation for Judith's disappointment, which has been mentioned above; and the said explanation, and its good effects, have been referred to for the purpose of giving the reader to understand that all such domestic matters were properly arranged, and that the style in which the young heiress made her *début*, under the protection of her London aunt, was exactly what it ought to be.

The consolation was a matter of less importance, and consisted in a proposal to take Judith to the National Gallery, in Trafalgar Square.

"It is a picture-gallery, is it not?" said Judith, eagerly.

"Yes, love, it is the national picture-gallery, and everybody goes there, of course, especially before the exhibition is open."

And to the National Gallery they went; and the consolation consisted in Judith's being speedily so much interested as to make her forget, very nearly, every thing in the world, except what was before her eyes. There are two ways of enjoying pictures. The one is by indulging a natural passion for imitative art, which often exists in the absence of every qualification for judgment

save innate feeling. The other arises from the exercise of a cultivated taste, and a competent knowledge of the principles upon which judgment rests.

Judith, as yet, was wholly and utterly incompetent to taste this last-named species of gratification; but to the first she was, indeed, most feelingly alive.

But she would have given much, could she have been alone; her aunt's anxiety to make her see every thing interfered greatly with her enjoyment.

When once a picture had got possession of her, it was like being torn away from a half-read volume of the deepest interest to make her move on to another; and when, at last, she reluctantly consented to leave the rooms, she felt so completely exhausted as to be totally incapable of taking part in the gossiping conversation to which the high spirits enjoyed at that moment by Miss Elfreda particularly disposed her.

Yet poor Judith really tried to exert herself, and to be agreeable; but the effort was a vain one, so much so, indeed, that her aunt at last stopped short, abruptly, in the midst of a very lively harangue upon the superiority of London to Westhampton as a residence, exclaiming, "Judith, my darling! you are ill!"

There was so much genuine uneasiness in the accent with which this was spoken, that Judith exerted herself very strenuously to remove the alarm which her silence and languor had occasioned, and at length succeeded by saying, "You may always believe me, dear aunt; I will never tell you any stories about any thing. And I am sure you are too kind to be angry if I sometimes appear particularly stupid, as I believe I do now. But it is only because I am tired."

"Then you did not like the Gallery, my sweet love!" cried Miss Elfreda, with the eagerness of one who had made an important discovery. "You shall never go to that nasty tiresome place again, dear angel!"

Judith smiled, and shook her head.

"Then it was the people, sweet love? Ah, you are spoiled, darling! Mrs. Chilbert is one of the most elegant women I know, though certainly I *do* now know a great many. And there is somebody else, who shall be nameless, that I feel pretty sure is exceedingly elegant also. So that accounts for it, dear. You have been bored to death, by finding yourself in the midst of a parcel of ill-dressed vulgar people. But wait a few

weeks, dearest; only be patient till the London season really begins, and you won't have that to complain of."

Whatever was the cause of Judith's temporary fit of languor, this tirade upon the *mauvais ton* of the company at the National Gallery completely cured it; and though she really did look pale and tired, she laughed with so much genuine heartiness, that the anxious heart of her devoted relative seemed completely re-assured thereby, while the heart of Judith herself was re-assured likewise by Miss Elfreda's saying, "Remember, my treasure, that you are never, upon any account, to go any where or do any thing that you do not like. Will you promise me always to keep *that* in your dear little head?"

Dr. Wroughtley had not greatly blundered in the estimate which he had formed of Judith's character at their first interview. She had a multitude of good qualities, but a readiness to yield to control (when affection did not bribe her to it) was not among them.

She nodded her head with a very comic sincerity of accordance when this arch-imperial mode of self-government was suggested to her, and said, "I am afraid, aunt, I shall only find it too easy to obey you in this. But I will be as good as I can—that is to say, as little unreasonable; and as I am not very old yet, we may comfort ourselves with the hope that even if I am *rather* unreasonable sometimes, I may grow wiser by and by."

"You are a perfect angel in every way," was the reply; and if Judith's recovered spirits did not make her feel more inclined to laugh again than would have been quite civil at that moment, Miss Elfreda had no means of finding it out, for she had turned her saucy face out of the window.

On the evening of that day Judith was formally presented to *l'amie de la maison*, Miss Tollbridge, or, more properly speaking, Miss Tollbridge was presented to her; and it was done, too, in a manner to make a very strong impression on the self-willed young heiress, an impression, by the way, very particularly in contradiction to that which it had been Miss Elfreda's intention to produce.

"This is Miss Tollbridge, my sweet Judith," said she; "a lady that you will often see here, for she is good enough to be useful to me in a hundred ways; but you need not trouble yourself, sweetest, to stand upon any ceremony with her. Her comings and goings,

you know, must never make any difference. If we are going out, we shall go out without minding her, you know; or if we have any one particular here, she will go away without at all minding it, either. You will remember that, darling, because it is better that we should all understand one another. You comprehend me, dearest?"

Judith comprehended her perfectly. She comprehended that Miss Tollbridge was a person whom her aunt Elfreda gave her leave to treat with all possible impertinence, setting her the example herself.

Whereupon Judith, with her characteristic wilfulness, and with the help, also, of one or two other peculiarities equally characteristic, quietly determined in her very heart of hearts that she would never, under any circumstances, omit any possible kindness, respect, or attention, which it should be in her power to show her.

Her answer, however, indicated nothing of all this to Miss Elfreda; "Very well, aunt," very soberly uttered, being all that she said.

It is just possible that an acute observer like old Dr. Wroughtley might have found, or fancied more meaning than Miss Elfreda found therein; but even if she had done so herself, her rejoinder would have consisted then, as it did now, in an enthusiastic enunciation of some loving epithet, which, to say truth, our presumptuous heiress had already become so certain of hearing, that it did not produce any very powerful effect upon her feelings.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

POOR Miss Tollbridge was in truth rather poorer now than when we parted with her last; for her brother was dead, and before he departed this life he had got himself into so bad a scrape with an unmerciful landlady that he must have died in a prison, had not his unfortunate sister consented to sink for ever a portion of her miserably small income in order to extricate him.

She was now, therefore, poor soul, still less inclined to quarrel with Miss Elfreda's bread and butter, because it was not always seasoned with kindness, than even when that comparatively well-endowed and decidedly distinguished personage first took up her abode in London.

All visions of being invited to make part of her establishment had, of course, long ago melted away; but the ladies were, nevertheless, still useful to each other, and for this

reason their intercourse was still constant and frequent.

Miss Elfreda, however, was by no means aware how useful she was to her humble friend when, for the purpose of putting her in her proper place, as she would have termed it, she took the trouble of making Judith fully acquainted with all the most disagreeable circumstances of poor Miss Tollbridge's position, principally for the purpose of putting her upon her guard against the danger of becoming too familiar with a person in such a lodging, and with such a total absence of every thing that was most essential to the situation of a gentlewoman; but also, partly, for the pleasure of pointing out the enormous distance which her own station in society rendered inevitably necessary between herself and her old acquaintance.

It would have been wiser had she let the subject alone; for though Judith was greatly comforted by finding that her ardent love for Mr. Frederic Dorking and her approaching marriage with him were as vehemently approved by her aunt Elfreda as they had been vehemently opposed by her aunt Barbara, she was not the sort of girl to give up her judgment on all points because she was satisfied on one. Neither did she find her sympathy at all awakened by the immense mass of tender epithets with which her aunt loaded her; and before she had been eight-and-forty hours in the house she had left the drawing-room twice, solely because she was so desperately weary of being called angel and darling.

After all, this was but a trifle, however; and in matters more important every thing seemed to go on admirably.

Before Judith had been ten days in London, she found herself with an extremely intelligent, hair-dressing, mantua-making lady's-maid, and with a carriage, horses, coachman, and footman, constantly and entirely at her command.

The contrast between this system and that of her aunt Barbara was sufficiently striking, and there could be no great doubt as to which she was likely to prefer, and yet it is a positive fact, that if Judith had questioned her own heart upon the subject, she would have found it difficult to decide which of her two aunts was most thoroughly distasteful to her.

Miss Barbara had treated her like a child, but Miss Elfreda treated her like an idiot. But the real point upon which she found them both so utterly "unloveable," to use the

word which suggested itself to her when meditating upon the subject, was the interested selfishness which she found it impossible to be blind to in either.

More than once after she had retired to her own room for the night, dismissed her maid, and laid her young head upon the pillow, she did not sleep, but passed the hours, at least a portion of them, in meditating upon the character of the mother she had lost. "Was ever contrast more complete!" thought Judith. "Mamma seemed never to think of herself. She was for ever and for ever trying to do good, or to give pleasure, to some one. Oh! why have I lost her, and lost her so very soon? Had she lived, I might have grown like her; and now, who knows what I may be like?"

And then her thoughts wandered to her aunt Penelope, that still unknown sister of her dear mother. And not only because she was still unknown did the heart of poor Judith cling to the idea that in all probability she was more loveable, but because, as she well knew, that dear mother had in truth loved her better.

"Am I then never to find her?" murmured Judith; and again and again she tormented herself by trying, vainly trying, to hit upon some scheme for achieving this.

"In London, where there are so many thousands of people, there surely must be somebody that could tell me, if I could but be happy enough to find them," thought she.

And then she determined to make an experiment on the morrow, as to whether some of the immense quantity of love professed for her by her aunt Elfreda might not be made to exercise itself in endeavouring to find out what she was so painfully anxious to learn. Having come to this sage resolve, she once more turned upon her pillow, and this time went to sleep.

Her first thought on the following morning was concerning the best way of putting this resolution in practice. She had not forgotten the cold discouragement of the answer which she had received from Miss Elfreda when she had written to her on the subject, nor the cold silence which had followed her former questioning; nevertheless, she tried to persuade herself that it was next to impossible to be called "love!" and "darling!" one moment, and to be told the next that an object in which her wishes and affections were so very deeply concerned was to be put aside, because the pursuit of it might be attended with some uncertainty and some trouble. The

reality, however, was greatly worse than her very worst fears had predicted.

The conversation began by Miss Elfreda expressing her hopes that her "darling little angel" had slept well. "Why, I cannot say I did sleep very well," replied Judith; "at least, I certainly did not sleep very much, for I heard the clock strike three before I began my sleeping business at all."

"My treasure!" exclaimed the fond aunt, in an accent of the most tender alarm.

"What could have occasioned this, my Judith? Remember, you must always tell me, sweet one, if you find any thing in your room, or most especially in the bed where that dear little head reposes, which is in any way disagreeable or uncomfortable to you. I would have every upholsterer in London set at work upon it, my Judith, rather than not have it remedied!"

"You are too kind, my dear aunt," replied Judith, feeling more than half ashamed at listening to such unbounded effusions of affection, while conscious that she felt little or no power to return it. "But the fault was less in the bed, than in the head that rested on it. Nevertheless, I think that the kindness that would do so much to smooth the one might help to tranquillize the other."

"You dear angelic creature! How divinely you express yourself!" cried Miss Elfreda, rapturously. "Only tell me, love, how this tranquillizing may be achieved, and you shall see that I will speedily set about it. I suspect already that I guess the nature of it, my darling. Do not those beautiful eyes, which could not be closed in sleep till three o'clock this morning, do they not ache with longing to behold a certain youth, whose initials are F. D.?"

"No, that is not it," replied Judith, slightly colouring, and slightly frowning also. "My mind is perfectly easy on the subject of F. D.; and though it is likely enough, perhaps, that I might dream of him if I slept, it is not likely that I should lie awake in order to dream without sleeping. I never lie awake when I ought to be asleep, unless I am unhappy about something."

"But what could make you unhappy last night, my beloved child?" said Miss Elfreda, in an accent of touching tenderness. "You know, at least I am sure you ought to know, my Judith, that there is no happiness which the earth could give which I should value so greatly as the dear power of making you happy for a single hour!"

"And it is because you seem to be so very kind to me, my dear aunt," returned Judith, "that I am going to tell you what it is that makes me now so unhappy as to prevent my sleeping even in your pretty comfortable bed; for I cannot help thinking that, with your large acquaintance, you must know somebody who would be able to help me in finding out what I am so very anxious to know. The fact is, that I shall never be happy, aunt Elfreda, no, never, till I have found out where my aunt Penelope and my cousin Charles are. Do you not think you could assist me in finding them?"

Where shall I find a simile that may help me to describe the effect which these words produced on the features, expression, voice, and attitude of Miss Elfreda? A sudden thunder cloud obscuring the brightness of a summer day will not do at all, because there is often a great deal that is grand and beautiful in this sudden change. But not so was it with that which now metamorphosed the whole look and bearing of Miss Elfreda Jenkins. Instead of being grand, nothing imaginable could be more miserably pitiful than the mortified expression which her homely features assumed as Judith pronounced the unfortunate names, which, as she believed, were more calculated to injure her in her pride of place than any others in the wide world. And as to beautiful! Is there any one who wants to be told that an elderly lady did not look beautiful when feeling most horribly disgusted, and most savagely cross?

There was a moment of very disagreeable silence. Judith had already said exactly what she wanted to say, and therefore said no more; and as for Miss Elfreda, she was for a short period too nearly choked by anger to say any thing.

"Is it possible, Judith Maitland?" she articulated at last, "is it possible that my sister Barbara can have had you with her for very nearly four months, and neglected, during the whole of that time, to inform you that the name you have now pronounced is a disgrace to the family to which it belongs? Has she so utterly neglected her duty, as not to make you aware that the only circumstance by which it has pleased Heaven to atone to us for the unmerited obloquy which that name has brought, has been by placing the unworthy owner of it in a situation too distant and too obscure to injure us?"

Judith Maitland possessed some really good and estimable qualities, but an imperturbable

temper was not among them, and it is highly probable that at that critical moment *la belle harmonie*, which had seemed to exist between the aunt and the niece would have been destroyed for ever by some violent outbreak of indignation on the part of the latter, had she not fortunately remembered, and precisely at the right moment, that it was but a few short days since she had quarrelled *à outrance* with another aunt, and that it was possible neither Mrs. Chilbert nor Mr. Frederic Dorking might greatly approve her again placing herself in a situation which would render it necessary for her to pack up her wardrobe and seek another dwelling.

Still the struggle by which this was prevented was not a slight one, for she became very pale, which was by no means usual with her.

It was, however, the best thing that could have happened, for it frightened Miss Elfreda, and set everything to rights in her tender bosom at once. Her reasonings upon the inexpediency of a quarrel had been as rapid and as effectual as those of her niece; and though as firmly resolved as ever to prevent so splendid a prospect as that which was opening before Judith to be marred or obscured in any way, by permitting her to come in contact with connexions so deplorably disgraceful as the Worthingtons, she wanted but a moment's reflection to convince her that there were better ways of preventing it than by quarrelling with the future peeress, or than by making her turn as white as a sheet by scolding her.

In short, Miss Elfreda felt greatly ashamed of her own violence, and did all she could to atone for it by saying, with a charming smile,—

“How silly I am, my sweet girl, to permit you to see how deeply the ill-conduct of my sister Penelope wounded me! She was a very lovely young woman, my dear Judith, and one whom all her family might have been proud of, had she not committed an act so utterly, so every way disgraceful. Just fancy, dearest, what it would be if you were to fall in love with your footman!”

And Miss Elfreda shuddered from head to foot; and Judith shuddered too, but not exactly in sympathy. Her thoughts shot off from Miss Elfreda and her dainty little drawing-room, to the walls of the National Gallery, and her heart whispered, “He too was a painter.” It was a whisper, because nobody heard it but herself; but it was deep,

distinct, and marvellously effective in its power of screwing her courage to pretty high resistance pitch.

In short, both ladies at the same moment vowed to themselves a very solemn vow. That of Miss Elfreda bound her to keep her precious young charge pure and undefiled from all contact with so lamentably disgraced a pair as Mrs. Worthington and her son Charles; while Judith vowed, with at least equal solemnity, that she would find them, even if she were driven to the disagreeable necessity of copying an advertisement which she had read with great interest in the “Times,” since her arrival in London, for the purpose of announcing to all whom it might concern, that if Penelope Worthington, late of Rome, or her son Charles, would make known their present residence through the medium of that invaluable messenger ’twixt man and man, they should hear of something very greatly to their advantage. Which did not merely mean, as Judith told herself, that they would obtain thereby a whole boxful of diamonds, but that they would find also a niece and a cousin ready to love them ten thousand times the more, because nobody else belonging to them seemed inclined to love them at all.

Which lady kept her vow best will be seen in the sequel; but they both derived a very considerable advantage from the mere mental act of registering this said solemn promise in their hearts, for it gave them both leisure to recover the placidity of their respective tempers, so that, by the time breakfast was over, no looker-on would have been likely to guess how very near they had been to a serious quarrel.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE weeks which immediately followed wore rapidly away, even though Frederic Dorking was not yet come to town, (for his father's house in Berkeley Square was not yet ready to receive the family,) and even though the gay part of the London season had not yet commenced.

For still there was abundance that was new, and abundance that was amusing to such a young novice as Judith; and Miss Elfreda managed very ably to get her young niece included in almost every invitation that was worth having. The difficulty of doing this was indeed not very great, for youth, beauty, and wealth, with a faultless toilet, amiable manners, and a magnificent

voice, ever good-humouredly at the service of those who wished to hear it, altogether furnished forth a guest for whom it was not very difficult to obtain invitations. On the whole, therefore, Judith was very well contented, for she got plenty of books to read, plenty of new music to practise, and an excellent piano-forte for the purpose.

Yet still she did certainly long rather impatiently to see Frederic Dorking and Mrs. Chilbert again, and did sometimes, perhaps, feel a less vivid degree of interest and delight at the lectures and other scientific meetings to which her aunt Elfreda led her, than that very superior-minded lady would have wished.

But on the whole they went on exceedingly well together; Judith herself very considerably increasing the stock of her own particular enjoyments, by being permitted to command the carriage for about two hours before it was wanted for any purpose in which her aunt took personal interest, in order to visit the National Gallery, as well as every other collection of pictures to which either money or interest could obtain admission.

Fortunately for the enjoyment of all the parties concerned, the aunt and niece, after an explanation of the most obliging civility on both sides, arrived at the conclusion that on the subject of picture-seeing their tastes did not exactly accord.

"In everything else, dearest," said Miss Elfreda, "we really might be twin sisters; but as to your fancy of going again and again to the same picture-gallery, it would be absolute affectation if I pretended to take any pleasure in it. I must see a picture for the first time in order really to enjoy it."

"Then I would not have you go with me for the world, my dear aunt," replied Judith; "and, fortunately, good Miss Tollbridge is of my way of thinking and not of yours. She has promised to be ready to go with me whenever I will call for her, and I know you can have no objection to my going with her, because you so often let me take my early walk with her in the park."

"Most certainly I have no objection," replied the discreet Miss Elfreda. "Miss Tollbridge is, in every respect, a most perfectly proper chaperon whenever you go out early, my dear child. But though as yet you may not, perhaps, be aware of the difference, I doubt if either Mrs. Chilbert or Mr. Frederic Dorking would say the same after two or three o'clock. That makes an immense dif-

ference, which you will understand better after you have lived in town for a few years, my darling Judith."

Judith, not being a particularly dull person, was already very fully capable of comprehending her aunt's feelings and motives; but nothing was to be gained for the humble friend thus unceremoniously summoned and dismissed by descanting on the subject, and as it was clearly evident that Miss Tollbridge was never so happy as when permitted to be in attendance on the young friend who was so constantly and so feelingly kind to her, their proceedings were carried on in a manner very decidedly agreeable to them both.

In this manner Judith became more familiarly acquainted with the treasures of art to be found in London than one in a thousand of its inhabitants, of any age or sex. Her love of painting was, in fact, one of those inborn and predominant tastes which are sometimes found to develop themselves almost without cultivation, and with little or no encouragement of any kind, save what so resolute an individual as Judith may almost always find in the gradual but constant increase and strengthening of the faculty itself,—an encouragement and a reward which, perhaps, none can fully appreciate except those who have profited by it themselves.

Be this as it may, the happiness of Judith during these exciting months of a perfectly novel state of existence was in a very great degree owing to it; and, with as little real sympathy as could well exist between two human beings who were both, in the main, well-intentioned, a degree of friendly intimacy took root during their daily expeditions between the old maid and the young one, of which the enlightened and lady-like Miss Elfreda never dreamed, and of the extent and sincerity of which it would have been very difficult to convince her by any avowal on their part, however veraciously exact or circumstantially confidential.

For what could have appeared more preposterously improbable in her eyes, or indeed in those of most people, than that a brilliant young heiress, just stepping forth into the sunshine of her prosperous existence, conscious both of beauty and talent, conscious, too, both that she loved and was beloved by one as highly and as brightly favoured by nature and by fortune as herself, should feel her heart touched, won, and very firmly bound to a poor, plain, needy, isolated, quizzical, middle-aged spinster, who possessed neither

shining qualities nor brilliant talents of any kind? Yet such was most decidedly the fact.

“And what was the charm, can you guess,
Which made them so fond of each other?”

Wholly and solely on Judith's side it was the charm, the sweetly-soothing heart-warming charm that for ever accompanies the consciousness of conferring real benefit and innocent enjoyment upon a fellow-creature.

It was, in fact, precisely the reward which our Great Master offers when He utters the simple-sounding command, “Love one another.”

On the side of Miss Tollbridge it was just as simple, just as natural, and therefore as exactly what it ought to be. She felt the sweet young kindness shown her at the very centre of her heart, and its pulses beat all the better for it, poor solitary soul!

Judith Maitland was, in truth, a kind-hearted little girl, but this would not have sufficed to have made her arrival in London so great a blessing as it certainly was to the desolate spinster, had nothing occurred to awaken another equally marked propensity of her nature. Judith had within her a feeling of hatred to oppression, so strong as to form very nearly the master feeling of her mind.

There was but one other which could be said to rival or even approach it in intensity, and this was the devotion of heart and soul which her nature seemed to offer spontaneously when she found, or fancied that she found, talent and worth combined.

To be enlightened and to be good, she held to be the nearest approach to perfection that any mortal could reach; and her heart and intellect seemed to hold themselves ready to bend, bow, and swear allegiance to the union, wherever she could find it.

She did not fancy that she had found it in Miss Tollbridge, but she did more than fancy that her position was not a happy one, that the means she possessed did not suffice to provide her with such necessities and comforts as she had been accustomed to enjoy, and might fairly have hoped for from the station in which she was born, and, moreover, that these inabilities and deficiencies in her means of existence did (strange to say!) create both the inclination and the courage in the mind of Miss Elfreda to treat her with a freedom that was very closely allied to impertinence.

All this formed a very sufficient fund of feeling from which such a heart as Judith's

would be likely to derive an impulse strong enough to supply an unceasing flow of kind offices; and possessing, as she did, ample power to render these kind offices essentially beneficial to their object, it naturally and inevitably followed that she received very great pleasure, as well as very great accommodation, from her frequent intercourse with Miss Tollbridge.

Nobody, with the least genuine knowledge of the human heart, could have been surprised at seeing the quiet but deeply happy look of Judith while she watched the improving aspect of Miss Tollbridge's *ci-devant* bare and cold-looking second floor, as a nice clean carpet seemed to spring up beneath her feet, while the painful old horse-hair sofa gave place to a thoroughly comfortable couch, and while chairs, tables, and even the tottering old fender were, in like manner, metamorphosed from miseries to mercies.

Of poor Miss Tollbridge's share in the satisfaction thus produced no explanation is necessary, but not only were her spirits cheered, her heart was touched also, and softened to the very centre by Judith's kindness; and I suspect that it may be fairly doubted, whether the most powerful homily ever composed on the vileness of man's fallen nature has produced as salutary an effect on the moral feelings of any individual that ever existed, as Judith's joyous outpourings of good-nature produced on the sadly-soured spirit of poor Miss Tollbridge.

Meanwhile the tedious weeks of waiting wore away, and the Dorking family took possession of their highly finished and very elegant mansion in Berkeley Square.

Perhaps Judith was more obliged to her aunt Elfreda than she would have in her own heart been pleased to confess, for the perfectly successful result of her first presentation to her intended mother-in-law.

That very elegant and very fashionable lady was exceedingly devoted to her son, who was not only her son, but her only child, and was, moreover, very handsome, very elegant, very accomplished, very amiable, very rich, and, to crown all, **VERY INDEPENDENT.**

It was this last peculiarity, perhaps, which led a lady, rather lofty in her bearing, haughty as to her usual manner, and decidedly disposed to think that it was more fitting for her to exact respect than to pay it,—doubtless it was this peculiar degree of independence, both in the temper and the position

of her son, which was the cause of her deciding, after a good deal of meditation on the subject, that she would pay the lady he had chosen the flattering compliment of a call.

Her son was greatly pleased, and expressed this pleasure warmly; and Mrs. Dorking really looked pleased too, as she witnessed his satisfaction.

But had Miss Elfreda been Miss Barbara, and the pretty modish-looking lodging in Green Street, Grosvenor Square, with the tall well-dressed footman, been metamorphosed into the grim-looking mansion at Westhampton, with old William, in his old livery, to open its door, it is highly probable that Mrs. Dorking would never have made that door a second visit; nor would she, instead of setting a multitude of influences at work to cure her son of a passion which, in that case, would have been most vehemently distasteful to her, have declared herself, as she did, "enchanted, beyond the power of expression," with the approaching connexion.

Nothing, in fact, could have been better managed than this first important interview between Mrs. Dorking and the young lady who was about to be honoured by a union with her son.

The day fixed for the arrival of the Dorking family in London had been announced to Judith in a letter from her lover, and very considerable was the agitation, both of aunt and niece, upon receiving the news.

On Judith this effect was only perceptible by her being unable to read a page of any book steadily from the beginning to the end, with a few other nervous symptoms of the same kind; but in Miss Elfreda it produced a degree of energetic activity which led to the very happiest results. A set of soft beautifully embroidered muslin curtains, which, though purchased immediately after Judith's arrival, had been hitherto preserved in dustless delicacy, were now suspended before the plate-glass windows; a huge mirror, made happily attainable by the removal of an odious tax, was so placed and so curtailed at the bottom of the room, as to delude the eye into believing that another pretty drawing-room lay beyond. And mignonette-ish gales filled the air, and delicate roses bloomed, and the handsome piano-forte was open, as if to promise harmony, and Miss Elfreda was habited in sober satin, precisely as a Miss Elfreda ought to be habited; and, in short, every thing was exactly as it should

be when Mrs. Dorking and her son Frederic entered the room.

The effect produced on the sensitive nerves of the elegant Mrs. Dorking was precisely every thing that Miss Elfreda wished; and the transitory but effectual circular glance of that lady, as she entered the apartment, settled upon the lady-like elderly spinster with great complacency.

But where was Judith?

Judith Maitland was not a very timid nor in any way an awkward girl, but she did dread this visit from Mrs. Dorking excessively. Frederic had called in Green Street by appointment the evening before, and no meeting, under the circumstances, could have been more gratifying to all the parties concerned. Frederic thought Judith was grown ten thousand times lovelier than ever; and Judith thought that she had never done the good looks and elegant manners of Frederic full justice before. The future nephew was charmed with his future aunt, and the future aunt was charmed with her future nephew. Every thing, from the first moment of his visit to the last, was delightful,—excepting one little word which he had murmured in the ear of Judith as he took his leave.

"My mother will come to-morrow to call on you."

There was something in the accent with which this was said, that seemed to intimate that this call was an honour done her, to which he wished her to be sensible. And having said this, he tenderly pressed the hand he held, and added, "Oh, my sweet Judith! I am so very, very anxious she should like you!"

I know not how it happened, but though these words were spoken with the utmost tenderness, they frightened her.

Had he said, instead, that he hoped Judith would like his mother, the effect would have been very different. Her whole heart would have flown to her lips, and she would have answered, "Ah! fear not for that! Be very sure that I shall like her!"

But what could she say now? She knew not what to say, and therefore she said nothing. But on him the effect of her silence was so transitory, as to be really of no consequence whatever. He would have liked, perhaps, to hear her reply, "I hope she will!"—or, "I will do all I can to make her!" but her not saying any thing was absolutely forgotten when he felt something like a slight pressure from the little hand that was clasped

in his, and heard, or fancied he heard, something like a very gentle little sigh.

Had not Miss Elfreda been present, there can be no doubt that he would have fallen at her feet, and in that impassioned attitude have repeated the vows that bound him to her; but as it was, he could only whisper the word, "Angel!" and add, "to-morrow!—we meet again to-morrow, my Judith!"

And then with a bow, that spoke not only of grace, but of all kinds of amiabilities besides, he took leave of Miss Elfreda in a way that made her exclaim, the moment he had closed the door, "Judith! that is decidedly the handsomest and most fascinating man that I ever saw in my life."

Judith felt not the least inclination to differ from her in this opinion, but, nevertheless, there was something like a feeling of heaviness at the bottom of her heart, as she thought how she should feel if it should unfortunately happen that Mrs. Dorking did not like her.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

BEFORE this dreaded visitant arrived on the following morning, Judith had, however, contrived to school herself into a tolerably tranquil state of mind. She told herself that she loved Frederic Dorking a great deal too well not to make him a good wife; and that if she did make him a good wife, and that his mother saw that they were happy together, there could be no great danger of her disliking her.

And under the influence of this reasoning she became very tolerably calm. She could not read, indeed,—that she found was quite beyond her power; but she managed to sit very respectably still at her work, only she preferred having the pretty little work-table, that was sacred to her use, placed in the oval recess of the back drawing-room window.

At first, Miss Elfreda objected to this, exclaiming, "No! sweet darling; not there! You will seem to be hiding yourself." But upon Judith's persisting, though with no better argument than, "Never mind, aunt!" the amiable spinster yielded; and, after she had done so, felt disposed to think that the young lady could in no way have placed herself to greater advantage, for what with flowers, and curtains, and *bergère*, and work-table,—all in the very best style, the little picture was quite perfect.

And thus it was that her intended daughter-

in-law first met the eye of the fastidious Mrs. Dorking, as she turned round to seek for her, after giving the scrutinizing glance to Miss Elfreda and her drawing-room, which has been already described as having been so highly satisfactory.

It really seemed to Mrs. Dorking, as her eyes first fixed themselves on Judith, that she must have been disappointed had she found her in any respect different from what she was.

"I knew that his taste could not blunder," would have been her first exclamation, had her thoughts been spoken; and "she is positively perfect!" would have been the second.

But the graceful Mrs. Dorking knew the value of "expressive silence" too well to employ any interpretation of her feelings at that moment, save a look. To this look followed a very elegant embrace, and then the whole scene went on exactly in the best manner possible.

Frederic Dorking was in a seventh heaven of happiness. Every thing was so very exactly what he wished it to be, and the mutual admiration so very evident!

And, thus much being said, it would be needless to follow all the subsequent details which it must be so easy for every one to imagine.

London was now beginning to be London in full bloom, and Mrs. Dorking smiled very pleasantly on her daughter elect as she sketched her plan of the brilliant *campagne* upon which, as she kindly said, they must immediately enter together.

"In many of our goings, and doings, my dear madam," she said, turning with the most graceful courtesy to Miss Elfreda, "it will contribute as much to my pleasure, as I am sure it will to that of your charming niece, that you should join us. But I feel convinced that my judgment does not deceive me when I give you credit for knowing a great deal too much of the fashionable world and of all its laws and usages, not to be aware that there may be some occasions when it would be more advantageous to our sweet Judith, who is now so equally an object of interest to us both, that I should run away with her alone, for a few hours, now and then. Of course you will choose that she should be presented before her marriage; and I think it probable that, as the most public possible proof of my entire approbation of my son's choice, you would prefer that I should have

the pleasant task of presenting her. Tell me, dear lady, am I right?"

Miss Elfreda assured her that no arrangement could be more gratifying to her feelings in every way.

"I was quite sure of it!" returned Mrs. Dorking, looking at her very benignly. "It rarely happens to me," she continued, "to find myself mistaken in the estimate I at once form of persons newly presented to me, particularly in that most essential article, good-breeding; my judgment there never deceives me!"

And, as she said this, she gave a little intelligent nod and smile to her son, as much as to say, "You know me, don't you?"

His bow in reply, though full of acquiescence, was not so smiling and so gay as her own; and his colour was a little heightened as it occurred to him, that before Miss Elfreda Jenkyns could become fully aware of his mother's perfect *savoir faire* in all such matters as those to which she had now so skilfully alluded, she would probably have to endure a pretty considerable amount of hints as to the proper place for unknown old maiden aunts to content themselves withal.

However, this was no business of his; and, moreover, he was quite aware that some little discipline of the kind would, in all human probability, be necessary before any possible sister of Miss Barbara Jenkyns could be rendered perfectly innoxious.

So whatever was disagreeable in his predictions on the subject was rapidly forgotten, and the evident admiration of his mother for his lovely Judith so completely tinted every thing *couleur de rose* in his eyes, that it would have been morally impossible for him to give his attention for a single moment to any object so much in the shade as to escape the influence of that delicious light.

And Judith felt very happy too! She was certainly very much relieved, as well as very much delighted, at the manner in which she had been received by Mrs. Dorking; for Mrs. Chilbert had thought it best to give her a gentle hint upon the peculiarities attributed to that stately lady.

Mrs. Chilbert, indeed, had personally no acquaintance with her, but as she happened to know that she possessed the dignified pre-eminence of being considered as one of the most haughty women in England, she had thought it best to put her dear sensitive Judith upon her guard against feeling too acutely any little crumbs of impertinence, the scatter-

ing of which formed, as it was thought by many, one of the greatest pleasures of Mrs. Dorking's brilliant existence.

The contrast between what she felt *might* have been her reception, and what it really was, rose upon her mind after her visitors were gone more strongly, if possible, than even while they were with her; and her satisfaction, while meditating on all that had passed, had but one drawback. She did not feel quite satisfied with Mrs. Dorking's demeanour towards her aunt. It is true she had made her a multitude of pretty speeches, and on some points had been actually almost gross in her flattery, but yet there was a something, now and then, which grated against her feelings.

But, unfortunately, these feelings were, on Judith's side, rather those of pride than of affection. She did not, and she could not, love her aunt Elfreda very much better than she loved her aunt Barbara. For though there were unquestionably many points on which the notions and the ways of the younger spinster were more agreeable to Judith than the notions and the ways of the elder, the broad foundation of her dislike to both was the same; namely, their harsh, proud, and unnatural enmity to a sister, whose character and conduct were, according to the testimony of Judith's mother, not only blameless, but very amiable.

Nor was the exaggerated appearance of fondness bestowed upon herself at all likely to soften the heart of the straight-forward, clear-sighted, and thoroughly sincere Judith. In this respect she, perhaps, liked her aunt Barbara the best of the two. So that, on the whole, the displeasure created by the somewhat doubtful civilities of Mrs. Dorking to this little-loved relative did not very much, nor very long, interfere with the happiness of finding herself treated like a favourite daughter by the ever-charming Frederic Dorking's stately mother.

Nor was it long before the happy Judith was made, as she said herself, ten thousand times more happy still, by the arrival of the Dean and Mrs. Chilbert at the house of the Dean's sister, Mrs. Marshdale.

The delight of this re-union with the only individual with whom she had ever enjoyed a fearless out-pouring of all her thoughts, hopes, and wishes, (for not even Frederic Dorking had been as yet admitted to so perfect and unrestrained a confidence,) was a happiness indeed! And nothing could more

decisively prove that the childish, Indian-bred girl really had something more than usually endearing and attractive about her, than the fact that Mrs. Chilbert was very nearly as much delighted at this re-union as herself.

It was a very favourable circumstance for the happiness of Judith during this brilliant period of her existence, that Mrs. Marshdale had a very handsome house in Bolton Row, and, moreover, that she was a lady by no means unfrequently admitted within very nearly the inmost circle of fashion. Had it not been for this, matters could scarcely have gone on so smoothly as they did; for Judith had not only been presented, but had been so much noticed and admired, as to have become a person of too much consequence in the eyes of her mother-in-law elect, for that lady to have resigned her upon any occasion to the chaperonship of any individual not perfectly eligible.

As to the objectionable *youth* of the beautiful heiress, it proved, by the good management of Mrs. Dorking, no obstacle at all to her presentation. Had she been born in England, indeed, as she justly observed, it might have produced a difficulty; but, as she cleverly remarked, nothing could be more likely than that the blunder made by the old lady at Westhampton, as related to her by her son, might have been repeated by the old lady in Green Street, and really, if they were listened to, a degree of confusion might arise, which would interfere in the most inconvenient manner with all her projects respecting the place that she intended her daughter should immediately hold in society,—etc., etc., etc.

To all which unanswerable reasoning Judith herself could say nothing; Miss Elfreda, of course, would say nothing, and Frederic agreed with his mother in all her reasonings on the subject. So Judith was presented, notwithstanding her deficient summers, and took her place accordingly amongst the acknowledged beauties of the season.

For a few weeks, the *débutante* enjoyed all this exceedingly; for during those weeks her beloved Mrs. Chilbert remained in London, and the friendly intimacy which had been established between that lady and Frederic Dorking during the seeming difficulties of his early love, when, without her aid, he would have been puzzled how to discover the means of eluding the vigilance of the blundering dragon who so strangely kept watch over the treasure he sought, had not only left

a remembrance that could never fade, but made her so naturally a party in all their present plans and projects, that, as long as she remained in town, the somewhat too active chaperonship of Mrs. Dorking was in a great measure suspended.

During this time Judith, of necessity, saw but little of her new friend, Miss Tollbridge, for their modes and manner of living were so utterly incongruous, that any attempt to bring them together would have been much more annoying to both, than demonstrative of affection to either. But when the leave of absence which the Dean thought proper to allow himself on this occasion was expired, and that Mr. Chilbert was no longer within reach of Judith, she again found time to embellish the existence of her new acquaintance, and to procure for herself, also, the renewal of a suspended, but not a forgotten pleasure, by often passing an hour or two of the early morning in visiting all the pictures they could get at, or in taking a *tête-à-tête* morning walk together in the parks.

All this might be done, however, and, in fact, was done, not only without the companionship of the man who was so soon to be her husband, but without his ever having the remotest idea that such were the habits, such the hours, and such the pleasures of his Judith.

Mrs. Chilbert, indeed, knew the world well enough to be aware that, to a woman of fashion so absolutely a slave to established routine as Mrs. Dorking, Judith's early rising and active exercise, and, infinitely more, her independent mode of flitting about with such a person as Miss Tollbridge in order to look at pictures, would appear much to like a bold deviation from established propriety to be tolerated, and of course she took care to make her young friend fully comprehend this before she left her.

This subject, together with various other themes more or less connected with the important object of Judith's retaining the high place she had so fortunately acquired in the opinion of Mrs. Dorking, had been repeatedly discussed between them, and it was not without considerable difficulty that the Dean's lady had succeeded in schooling Judith into such a degree of prudent and respectful reserve on such matters, as might prevent all risk of the propriety of such manœuvres being ever made a subject of discussion between them. For Mrs. Chilbert well knew, that if Judith found herself called upon either to

state a fact or give an opinion, she would either do so truly, or refuse to do so at all. And it might be difficult to say which of these two methods would be most certain to lead to a disagreeable result.

All, therefore, that the watchful prudence of Mrs. Chilbert could hope to effect was, to persuade Judith that it was a duty she owed to Frederic Dorking, and a caution which his devoted affection well merited from her, not to involve him in the painful task of arbitrating in a matter of opinion between his mother and his future wife.

"He loves you so tenderly, my dearest Judith," said her friend, judiciously dwelling upon the only plea likely to induce her free spirit to endure the sort of control imposed upon it, "that to my feelings there would be something desperately hard-hearted and ungrateful in forcing such a task upon him."

"And I would not be ungrateful to him for the world!" cried Judith, with tearful eyes, and a voice trembling with the deep sincerity of her emotion. "But must we always go on so, Mrs. Chilbert? It won't do, dear friend. Depend upon it we shall never be happy together, if we begin by having secrets. Why at this very moment that you are frightened to death at the idea of my telling him that dear, quiet, innocent Miss Tollbridge and I go very often to the National Gallery together, with nobody to take care of us but ourselves, at this very moment, Mrs. Chilbert, I have got another secret ten thousand times more important, and one that I must and will tell him, as soon as I know a little more about it myself."

This was said at the very moment that Mrs. Dorking was coming up the stairs in Green Street, to inform her "sweet daughter, Judith," as she seemed proud of calling her, that she should call at half-past nine to take her to the Opera that evening.

Her entrance of necessity brought this discussion to a conclusion, and Mrs. Chilbert took her leave, but not before she had asked and received a promise from Judith to be with her in Bolton Row at an early hour on the morrow, that being the last day of her stay in town.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

JUDITH kept her word, and was admitted to the bed-room of her friend, to which she had retired immediately after breakfast for the express purpose of receiving her alone.

"And this is the last day I am to have

you?" exclaimed Judith. "How very, very sad!"

"Next year, dearest, you shall come with the beloved Frederic to the Deanery to visit me; and then, Judith, we will go back to the good old times of long gossips and long practisings. Nay, if you are not by that time become too fine a lady, we will go back to our good singing, Miss Sophy, and her papa."

"Do you think I shall ever grow fine?" said Judith. "Oh! I do so hate it!" she continued, with something very like a groan. "How Mrs. Dorking can go on as she does, as if she were for ever walking between high stone walls, which prevented her swerving a single inch either to the right hand or to the left,—how she can for ever go on so and live, is a mystery I shall never be able to solve!"

"You will understand it better, perhaps, one of these days; not that I think a coronet will make much difference in you, my Judith. But tell me, dearest, what is the portentous secret that you are bent upon divulging to your Frederic?"

"Neither more nor less than that I have got an aunt, who ran away with her drawing-master," replied Judith.

Mrs. Chilbert coloured, and looked vexed.

"When you are married, Judith, I shall think you justified, nay, more than justified, in doing this," replied Mrs. Chilbert. "But if you take it into your head to do it now, you may occasion much embarrassment to Frederic Dorking, and much painful emotion to yourself. Think well of this, my dear friend."

"But would you let him marry me under a delusion?" said Judith. "Under the terrible delusion," she added, with a somewhat bitter smile, "of having no worse aunts belonging to me than Miss Barbara and Miss Elfreda Jenkyns? My very, very dearest friend, no! I cannot consent to obtain the honour of being Mrs. Dorking's daughter-in-law by a cheat."

"You do not state the case fairly, even to yourself, Judith," returned her friend. "You must know, if you will be candid enough to examine the question in its true light, that there is no cheating in the case. At this very moment you do not know whether this unfortunate aunt Penelope be dead or alive; and such being the case, how can you, by any sophistry, persuade yourself that it would be right to disturb the happy serenity of the admirable young man whom you profess to

love, by suggesting to his proud unamiable mother the possibility that some day or other you may chance to find out another aunt still less desirable than aunt Barbara herself?"

"I could not so state the case, if I stated it truly," replied Judith, looking rather red, and very grave; "because I am deeply persuaded that when I do find this lost aunt, I shall find her to be exactly all that my dear, dear mother represented her. And if, being such, I should find also that Frederic Dorking did not value her as I should think she ought to be valued, why then, my own dearest Mrs. Chilbert, not even your eloquence could prevent my repenting that I had become his wife."

"I shall be quite ready to trust to your own heart, Judith, about that," returned Mrs. Chilbert, smiling; "and we will not waste our last precious moments in disputing on the probability or improbability of your getting tired of Frederick Dorking after you are married to him. All I have to say on this subject may be uttered in very few words. Do not suffer any visionary notions respecting the moral beauty of confidential disclosures to beguile you into hazarding your own happiness, and, what you ought to hold more sacred still, the happiness of the man whom you have consented to make your husband, by any false theories of this kind. You are very young, Judith, but a few more years will teach you that there is nothing either amiable or holy in disturbing the happiness of a friend by suggesting evils which perhaps may never occur, and *that* solely for the boastful pleasure of telling yourself that you are too noble-minded to conceal anything."

Judith shook her head very doubtingly as she listened to this theory, and she looked into Mrs. Dean's eyes with a glance which made that lady commence a curious investigation of something that almost looked like a spot upon her Quaker-coloured satin. Her young friend, however, was either too generous or too wise to push her upon ground that might perhaps be made to tremble a little under her feet, and merely said that the *evil* now alluded to was very likely to become known to Frederic Dorking without her making any confidential disclosure on the subject, for she had lately employed a friend to make some further inquiries for her in Rome, and these inquiries would be made by an artist among artists. "And in this way, you know," added Judith, "I shall be much more likely to hear tidings of my late uncle

Worthington, or, if not of him, of his widow and son, than I could hope for from the more aristocratical inquiries that you were so kind as to institute for me; and, of course, if I do hear of them, my dear Mrs. Chilbert, it would not be right to keep the jewels bequeathed to them by my mother for the use of Mrs. Frederic Dorking when she goes to court as a bride. You would not approve my doing that, dearest, would you?"

"How can you talk so much idle nonsense, Judith?" cried Mrs. Chilbert, rather wrathfully.

"Upon my word and honour, I did not mean to talk nonsense," returned Judith, gravely. "If I should at length succeed in discovering where my aunt and cousin are to be found, will it not be my duty to transmit to them the property that has been entrusted to my care for their use?"

"A very silly question, because you know the answer before you ask it," replied Mrs. Chilbert.

"Of course I know the answer," returned Judith; "and *you* know, dearest, that it was the inference which must follow thereupon that I was driving you to. Would you have me, the affianced wife of Frederic, he who is so candid, so open-hearted, so confiding to me in all ways, would you have me secretly send off a packet containing about a thousand pounds worth of diamonds without permitting him to help me, or even to know what I was about?"

"No, Judith, I should not like you to do that," replied Mrs. Chilbert, with her accustomed frankness. "But if you have not mentioned your aunt Worthington to him as yet, will you promise me not to do it as long as it remains doubtful whether you can find her or not?"

"Yes, I will agree to promise that," replied Judith, "because it accords with my own opinion, and with all I have done already. What gossipings we may have together after we are married, nobody knows; but I had already made up my mind, after thinking a great deal on the subject, that there would be more of cruelty than kindness, considering the sort of mother he has got, in telling him a long romantic story about an aunt that had eloped first, and was lost afterwards. I could so well fancy Mrs. Dorking's look, if he thought it his duty to repeat it to her! No; I see no use in this, but a good deal of unnecessary disagreeableness. And so, my dearest Mrs. Chilbert, I promise to wait patiently till I have

received news concerning the hunt among the artists that I have now instituted. I shall have this answer months before the time fixed for our marriage, and if it brings me no tidings of my unfortunate relatives, I shall content myself with placing the casket of jewels in the hands of my husband the very day I am married to him, together with my mother's written instructions about them, merely telling him that I can find no trace either of Mrs. Worthington or her son, and begging him, for my sake, to take charge of the deposit, and keep it safely at his banker's, in the hope at some future day of discovering the parties to whom it belongs. This will be a sort of secret that he will not, I imagine, think it necessary to communicate to his stately mamma, and he will, therefore, be spared all her marvels and miseries on the subject. But should my present search prove successful, you must forgive me, my beloved friend, if I refuse to follow your advice; for, in that case, I shall inform Frederic immediately of exactly all that I know myself on the subject, let the consequence of doing so be what it may."

"Very well, Judith; I not only submit, but I will be generous enough to confess that I believe you are right," returned Mrs. Chilbert. "But I will confess also, that, knowing Mrs. Dorking as I now know her, I shall be—" and she stopped.

"Very sorry to hear that my seekings have been successful," said Judith.

"Exactly so, dearest. But though we may think differently on this point, do not let us quarrel about it," returned her friend.

"Quarrel? Heaven forbid!" cried Judith, affectionately embracing her. "Do I not know that every thought you bestow upon me is a wish, in some shape or other, for my happiness? And shall I not owe all the happiness of my life to you? Except—and except—"

"Except what, my own dear Judith?" asked Mrs. Chilbert, fondly returning her caress. "Do not let me think that you will ever owe sorrow to me."

"Alas! but I shall, though!" cried Judith, while a hearty flood of tears attested her sincerity. "I sometimes tremble to think how much of the enjoyment of the last ten weeks I have owed to you. Will any thing seem the same to me when you are gone? Do not think that I have any doubts of my dearest Frederic. Indeed I have not. I am more and more convinced, every time I see him, that he is the

best and most amiable creature in existence. But still, when you are gone, I feel a sort of presentiment that every thing will appear to me stale, flat, and unprofitable."

"No, my Judith, no! We shall write to each other, and we shall often, often have the great and true delight of meeting again. As to your adorer, I really think he must feel heartily glad that I am going; and if he had not the very sweetest temper in the world, Judith, I am equally sure that he could not have been so uniformly kind to me as he has been; for I have often been conscious of occupying more of your attention than I ought to have done in your present interesting circumstances."

"If he had quarrelled with me for loving you, my dear friend, the quarrel must perforce have been eternal, for I shall never leave it off," said Judith.

And then there were more tears shed on both sides than could be accounted wise on either; but, though not much alike, for Judith was in some respects made of sterner, or, at any rate, of firmer stuff than her friend, they had much of that real sympathy of taste between them which renders companionship delightful. It was the first time of Judith's young life that she had ever encountered this, and it had been to her a source of great and new enjoyment, doubtless felt to be so the more keenly from the chilling absence of every thing like it in her cold and dull aunt Barbara.

Not all her brilliant prospects, therefore, could prevent this parting from being a very sad business; and if Miss Elfreda could have reproved her "darling angel" for anything, it would have been for the swollen eyelids which so seriously impaired her beauty, when Mrs. Dorking and Frederic called to take her with them to the Opera on the evening of the day when it had taken place. But, fortunately, Frederic understood the cause, and only loved her the better.

CHAPTER XL.

BUT, alas! poor Judith! Or perhaps it would be more just to say, poor Frederic Dorking! For most certain it is, that not all his devotion—and he was very particularly devoted to her that evening—could make her feel the same degree of enjoyment which she had experienced in that same box a few nights before, when Mrs. Chilbert had been of the party.

It was unfortunate, too, that the opera happened to be the same, because it was one

every note of which was almost as well known to the two friends as if they had written it; and when Grisi gave a passage, into which she threw all the impassioned inspiration of her extraordinary genius, or when Persiani gave the result of one of her sweet studies of a well-known cadence, the pleasure of both was redoubled, as completely as a fair face reflected in a mirror, and in this species of sympathy there is a pleasure which none but those who have felt it can guess.

Judith was not so unjust, not so unreasonable, as ever to dream that she could love Frederic Dorking the less, because this was a pleasure that he could not enjoy. On the contrary, indeed, she very often felt disposed to love him the better for the sweet temper he displayed in amusing himself with his lorgnette in looking round the house at the departing crowd, while they kept him imprisoned till the last note had died away into silence.

Yet, nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the swollen eyelids of Judith were in great danger of being swollen still more, as she felt the solitude of her own emotions while listening to the same strains that had called up so much of answering feeling in the charming features of Mrs. Chilbert when last she heard them.

She smiled, however, very kindly when, after complying with her well-known wish of not losing the finale, he offered her his arm with an expressive "Now, then!" as soon as the curtain dropped.

As for Mrs. Dorking, her indulgence of this whim arose from a different motive. It was her habit to leave her box either among the very first, or among the very last in the house; for having a defect in her vision, which rendered it difficult for her to recognise anybody in an imperfect light, she hated nothing more than being obliged to pass through the lobbies when they were crowded, which was converting, she said, the best part of the entertainment into perfect torture. For what could be so tormenting as to receive a flattering "How do?" perhaps from a duchess, and to reply to it by doubtingly pronouncing the title of a countess?

So on this occasion, as on many former ones, Judith was indulged with the last expiring notes of the strains she knew so perfectly and loved so well, and yet she went away with a sort of unsatisfied coldness at her heart that made her conscious of being more

than usually fatigued,—and she was very glad to get rid of all the lights, and of all the eyes.

But, perhaps, the difference made by the absence of Mrs. Chilbert was still more felt on the following morning. None of our habits are more difficult to change than those which regulate our habit of rising. Most ladies who play very well are obliged to rise early, for it is only by doing so that they can find the hours that are absolutely necessary for their daily practice, if they aim at anything like real excellence in their favourite art.

Both Mrs. Chilbert and Judith were in the habit of submitting themselves to this necessity, and though the regular practising of both was in a great measure suspended during the weeks they were together in London, they could neither of them teach themselves to lie in bed so late as not to leave some superfluous hours before the fine-lady business of a London morning began.

Upon comparing notes, and finding this to be equally the case with both, it was speedily arranged between them, that Judith's carriage should be always ready to take them from their respective breakfast-tables as early as twelve, and not unfrequently as early as eleven o'clock; Mrs. Dorking's carriage being always ready, when the proper hour for appearing arrived, to give a seat in her peculiarly well turned-out equipage to the fair Judith; and Mrs. Chilbert's sister being equally ready at the same rational time to take *her*, whenever it was the fashion of the hour to go.

Under this system, our two friends had enjoyed many very delightful *tête-à-tête* expeditions, in all of which Frederic Dorking would of course have been invited to join, had not Mrs. Chilbert discovered, with a certainty that left no room for doubt, that if he accepted such invitation, it would have been as a part of the duty that he owed his lady love, and not from inclination; for so inveterately late were his habits, that he constantly preferred travelling by night, to the intolerable bore of being ready for an early train in the morning.

Nevertheless, when the subject of an early morning excursion was first discussed between them, Frederic declared, with all the ardour of a devoted lover, that he was in raptures at the idea of accompanying them; Judith was too new to London, and its strange confusion of times and seasons, to

have the very least doubt about his being in earnest.

But Mrs. Chilbert had her suspicions, which a little clever cross examination so completely confirmed, that with the skill of an able tactician she at once decided that the constancy of her friend's *fiancé* should not be submitted to a species of proof more likely a thousand times to drive him into the fatal infidelity of yawning, than exposing him to the rival attractions of a score of young beauties.

So she got out of the scrape very ably, hinting at the well-known discrepancy between evening vows and morning vows, and leaving him convinced that they were not at all more inclined to drive to Richmond or Kew before luncheon than he was; and the thing ended by Mrs. Chilbert and Judith's passing many such very delightful mornings together, though without talking about it to anybody, that when the first blank day came which followed her departure, Judith felt that her absence would rob her new existence of at least half its charm.

We read beautiful love-stories, and ballads, and plays, about poverty-stricken knights and ladies of high degree, to say nothing of kings and beggars, in all of which the most perfect felicity is the result of the most incongruous unions; and in some cases this may have been true, and it would be easy enough to imagine a great many others where it might be true.

But there is one species of incongruity, or diversity, or inequality, against which I would willingly guard the whole world, if I could, and my own beloved countrymen and countrywomen in particular.

A matrimonial union between two persons, one of whom has been brought up in the habits of what is called fashionable life, and the other with habits that had nothing to do with fashion at all, is less likely to turn out well, as to the happiness to be derived from companionship, than many a marriage the objections to which would thunder more in the index.

I do not mean to assert that this must always be the case, nor may it even threaten to be so in the case before us; but the probabilities are greatly against the existence of very perfect harmony.

The feelings that are brought into contact, and into opposition, by such an union, may appear at the first glance to be very trifling; and so does the sting of a gnat. But a wise man would rather take up his abode in a

land occasionally visited by wolves, than in a lovely grove infested by mosquitos.

There must be something very, *very* deplorable in being perpetually exposed,—not to the anger, not to the reprehension, not to the dislike of the being you have selected as your companion for life, but everlastingly to his or her contempt!

And let any honest reader say whether, in his inmost heart and soul, he does not believe that there would be more *contempt*, (properly so called,)—whether he does not think, and believe that there would be more *CONTEMPT* generated in the mind of a person of fashion by the perpetual display of ignorance respecting the forms, ceremonies, modes, and ordinances of fashionable life, than by the perpetration of a very considerable amount of positive sin?

If this be the case, such marriages ought to be very carefully avoided; which I mean as a very pithy *avis au lecteur*.

But this is a mere digression, and has little or nothing to do with the continuance of the attachment between Judith and Mr. Frederic Dorking. Indeed there was so much of native elegance as well as beauty in Judith Maitland, that even Mrs. Dorking herself might be excused for not discovering how ignorant she was of many laws which made very essential items in the code by which she was herself regulated.

As to the abomination of early rising, and going about seeing sights before any human being that one had ever heard of having opened their eyes, this atrocity was kept most completely out of sight, which was achieved by the able generalship of Mrs. Chilbert as long as she remained in town, and by a feeling of delicacy on the part of Judith afterwards. Her reason for never alluding to her early excursions afterwards had nothing to do with being ashamed of them, but arose solely from the fear of Frederic's proposing to join in them when she was once again reduced to the chaperonship of Miss Tollbridge. This, she was quite aware, would not be *comme il faut*, and she therefore very discreetly took care to avoid it.

But let it not be supposed that, during all this happy time, Judith had either forgotten or neglected her friend, chaperon, and *protégée*! It would have been forgetting her own heart to do so. Neither did Miss Tollbridge forget now exceedingly inconvenient it would be to Judith, while so very particularly engaged elsewhere, to fancy for a mo-

ment that she expected the continuance of their former ways of going on. She was, on the contrary, herself the first to feel, and to point out, the impossibility of it.

"Don't you ever think of me, for any single minute of any single day," said she; "for if you did, it would give me a great deal more pain than pleasure. I understand all about it, my dear; and you won't be paying me any compliment if you do any thing that shall make me doubt that you know this. You have made me so very comfortable, by your generous kindness, in a hundred ways, that I am no longer the poor miserable spinster you found me when you first came to town. That subscription to Hookham's is itself quite enough to make any reasonable woman happy."

And Judith believed her, and therefore yielded to the other calls upon her time without reluctance, taking good care, however, not to omit any of the numerous little thoughtful benefactions by which she had contrived to make the poor lady forget that her only brother, and only protector, had ended his mortal career by robbing her.

When the time came, therefore, for Judith again to seek her companionship, she found that there was no link broken, and that the interruption had only had the effect of making the renewal of their intercourse appear more valuable to both.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE season was now arrived for the display of contemporary talent in the annual exhibition of the Royal Academy. Judith had been taken in proper style by Mrs. Dorking to the private view, but as Frederic was by her side and more than usually agreeable, and as her attention was, to say the least, pretty constantly divided on that occasion between the celebrities who walked the floor and those who were suspended on the walls, she took an early opportunity after the departure of Mrs. Chilbert to visit the splendid display of national talent, national industry, and national wealth, with the faithful friend who was only too happy to follow her wherever she liked to go, who was ready to pause where she paused, and to move on when she moved on.

Young as Judith was, and ignorant as till very lately she had been of every thing deserving the name of art, she was not now such an ignorant novice as not to feel the heavy change produced upon her feelings by

going from one side of the Trafalgar Square Gallery to the other. For some time she experienced so great a sensation of displeasure from the exchange, that she felt strongly inclined to protest that she would never look at any newly painted canvass again, for that there was something in the glare and dazzling freshness that made her head ache, and caused her altogether to feel ill and uncomfortable.

"After my constant visits to the dear old gallery, it seems like the greediness of a child, who throws aside a delicate nectarine for the sake of munching a huge apple, to come here," said she to Miss Tollbridge, the first time they entered the Royal Academy together, which was at that well-chosen early hour which those faithful allies always selected for seeing pictures.

"Certainly, my dear, the two galleries will not bear a comparison," replied Miss Tollbridge; "but I don't think it is quite fair to make one."

"Oh! how true that is!" cried the reasonable Judith, instantly feeling that the apple might be a precious thing as well as the nectarine, and that nothing but the simplicity of folly, or the sophistication of affectation, could so place them in juxta-position, as to make one lessen the value of the other.

"My dear Miss Tollbridge! that little word of yours has given me an invaluable lesson," continued Judith, passing her arm under that of her companion, and preparing herself for what she had never attempted before; namely, a deliberate examination of the pictures. "In the first place, you know that we have here the miscellaneous labours of a most miscellaneous set; many of them perhaps early attempts, and many more produced, not by the bright and almost god-like inspirations of genius, but by the necessity of imitating a homely set of features, male or female, young or old, in order that the artist may live! I wish," she resumed, after shutting her eyes for a moment, "I wish they were not so very bright! But I dare say they will become less painful to the eyes when the tints are mellowed a little by time, and when there are not so many of them to be seen together."

"Yes, I dare say it would be so," replied Miss Tollbridge. "And besides, if we knew all the people," she added, "it would be a great deal more interesting."

"Do you think it would?" returned Judith, rather doubtingly. "But let us sit down here

for a moment," said she, drawing her companion towards a convenient bench, "for I feel rather giddy. The whole effect is perfectly dazzling."

They sat down, and occupied themselves silently for several minutes in looking at what was within their reach, Miss Tollbridge consulting her catalogue the whole time with unwearied industry, while Judith was indulging in meditation. "I wish," said the latter, at length, "I wish, Miss Tollbridge, that I could persuade myself that all the weary hours that have been bestowed on this world of canvass had been paid for, liberally paid for! If I were sure of this, the looking at them would be much less painful."

"Painful? my dear child! Do not stay a moment longer if you find it painful," cried Miss Tollbridge, eagerly.

"Oh! yes; I must stay, for I want to look at a great many of them. I did not exactly mean bodily pain," said Judith, "but I cannot help thinking how dreadful it must be to labour so for an uncertainty! And even then, suppose the work was ordered, a portrait, for instance, like that fat gentleman before us, in his fine satin waistcoat, how do we know but that the poor artist may be conscious of really possessing some talent? Perhaps he may feel that he could paint a group of naked children at play, that might look like so many living creatures suddenly suspended in their movements and thrown upon the canvass as it were by magic; Rubens does that, you know, continually. But only fancy the misery of an artist who *could* do something a little like it, fancy his misery at being obliged to do such a thing as *that*, in order to avoid starvation! There is pain in that idea, is there not, Miss Tollbridge?"

"Indeed there is!" replied her companion, very dolorously.

Judith sat on for some minutes in perfect silence, meditating sadly enough upon her uncle Worthington, and her aunt Worthington, and her cousin Charles Worthington, and upon the cruel ill-luck which prevented a meeting between them, which would be likely to give so much pleasure to them all; for at that moment her two maiden aunts, her intended mother-in-law, and even her intended husband, were quite forgotten.

"We must not go till we have had a look at Mr. Landseer's pictures," said Miss Tollbridge, interrupting her reverie. And they rose, and moved on.

"These dogs," said Judith, as she stood

before a great picture of the great artist; "these dogs, Miss Tollbridge, overthrow all my amiable theories about old pictures, and new pictures, and the mellowing effects of time, and the inspiring result of patronage, when warmed by royal companionship and noble friendships,—not to mention a multitude of other fanciful '*may be's*,' by which, for this hour past, I have been endeavouring to account for the difference between what has been and what is. But, notwithstanding all my deep consciousness of my own ignorance, nothing will persuade me that dogs were ever before portrayed with such exquisite skill as those before us. The shepherd, great as it is, may have had an equal in the good old days that are gone, but the dogs never."

"They are very good dogs indeed!" replied Miss Tollbridge, in an accent so utterly unsympathetic, that poor Judith felt positively ashamed of herself, and blushed the genuine blush of sixteen and a half, at having been guilty of enthusiasm.

Had she followed her first impulse, she would have gone in search of the servant and the carriage directly; but she was too good-natured to do this, for she had established it as a rule, whenever they made one of their morning visits to Trafalgar Square, that the adventure should conclude with a visit to Farrance, the pastry-cook; Judith having discovered, beyond the possibility of doubt, that ices and buns formed a luncheon particularly agreeable to Miss Tollbridge. But it was still too early for this, and therefore, after leaving the great rooms, they strolled into one of the smaller ones, in which were exhibited flower-pieces, plans of porticos and palaces, and drawings of various descriptions.

As there was still a good half-hour to be worn away before there was any chance of their finding ice ready, Judith sat herself to examine the walls systematically, and while thus engaged she came upon a small drawing, neatly mounted, which looked more fitted for the pages of a lady's album than for the walls of the Royal Academy, but which, nevertheless, struck her as being singularly graceful and picturesque.

Had Judith ever been at Rome, she would have instantly recognised in this little coloured sketch the well-known steps of the Piazza di Spagna, with its usual groups of black-eyed children, about equally remarkable for dirt and picturesque costume, and all holding

themselves ready to obey the beckon of the first artist who might chance to want them in his studio.

The drawing was slight, but brilliant, and very graceful, both in composition and execution.

She looked at it long, and then passed on; but nothing else detained her attention much, and again she returned to it. On this second examination, it appeared to her still more interesting, and more effective in its masterly but slight finishing than at first; and having given up her catalogue to Miss Tollbridge, she asked her to turn to No. 1695, and tell her what she found there.

Miss Tollbridge obeyed her instantly, and read very distinctly these words:—"Sketch of well-known models, from the steps in the Piazza di Spagna, at Rome. Charles Worthington. No. —, Newman Street, Oxford Street."

Judith uttered a cry that drew upon her all the eyes in the room. Fortunately, they were not many; and as she had sufficient presence of mind to seat herself immediately, and to hide her agitated features amidst the draperies of her friend, who immediately drew near her, she escaped any very obvious attention.

But the moment was, indeed, one that might well overthrow her fortitude. The search after her aunt, hitherto so vain, yet ever held by her as so sacred an enterprise, from having been enjoined by the last words of her mother, was at last successful, and that at a time when she had almost begun to think it hopeless.

The first faint weakness of a too sudden emotion being passed, her feelings were all made up of joy and thankfulness, and she could with difficulty restrain herself from giving such outward demonstrations of this joy, as might have made both it and herself more conspicuous than would have been desirable.

But what was she to do? What was she to do first?

Fly to them without a moment's delay, was the answer that her heart gave to this question. But she did not want to have Miss Tollbridge, she did not want to have anybody present at her first interview with her aunt.

That good kind friend stood looking at her with such an expression of mixed astonishment and anxiety on her features, as made it absolutely necessary that she should, in some

way, explain to her what was passing in her mind. But the thing was by no means easy, for not only had she to get rid of Miss Tollbridge, but she felt that, under all ordinary circumstances, her next step ought to be to inform her aunt Elfreda of the discovery she had made, and invite her to take Miss Tollbridge's place, and accompany her instantly to Newman Street.

But the thought of doing this fell upon her heart like ice. All the cold harsh anger, the cruel indifference, with which every mention, every allusion, to her aunt Penelope had been always met by her maiden sisters, recurred to her so strongly, that she felt she should be doing Mrs. Worthington an injury rather than a kindness, if she forced upon her the visit of Miss Elfreda at the same time as her own. It is wonderful to see with what rapidity circumstances will assist in developing character, at the age when childhood is giving place to adolescence.

A few moments sufficed to awaken in the heart and head of Judith a multitude of faculties which had never been in action there before; and the result was, that she turned to her uneasy-looking friend with a kind smile, and said, "I am afraid I have frightened you, my dear Miss Tollbridge, because I have been startled myself. I have found in the catalogue of artists' names one that interests me greatly, because it is one that would have interested my mother. But if it prove to be the person I hope it is, the discovery will be a very pleasant one, and therefore it is only joy that has overpowered me. I will take you home now, if you will let me; and then I will set myself soberly to think of what steps it will be best to take, in order to ascertain whether I am right or wrong in my conjecture."

Miss Tollbridge immediately prepared to accompany her down stairs, but she looked into her face inquiringly; and as Judith said no more, she ventured to observe, as the carriage door closed upon them, that, of course, Judith would want to go home directly, in order to consult her aunt Elfreda.

"I will tell you what must be done before anybody is consulted," replied Judith, with such gay indifference of tone, as greatly to tranquillize the spirits of her companion; "we must drive to Farrance's, Miss Tollbridge," and she gave the necessary order to the servant. "You must not be cheated out of your luncheon, because I have seen in the catalogue a name with which my mother was acquainted."

But when the carriage stopped, poor Judith felt that she had no power to wait for the deliberate disappearance of a mountain of ice under the cautious teaspoon of Miss Tollbridge; and, therefore, with a considerable tincture of her new-born decision of character, she checked the footman when he was about to open the door, saying, "No, Thomas, no; we shall not get out to-day. Tell them to put up half-a-dozen Bath buns, and we will take them in the carriage." Had Judith been tempted by any circumstance to make such an alteration in her usual arrangements a few hours before, it might have been done, perhaps, but it would have been done differently; and trifling as the occurrence was, Miss Tollbridge felt this difference to a degree that would have greatly astonished Judith had she been aware of it, for she was perfectly unconscious of any such change herself. But had she pressed her own hand upon her own bosom at that moment, she would have become conscious, at least, that she was not likely to do or say any thing in an ordinary way.

"Store Street," said Judith, as she received the packet of buns. And to Store Street, where the lodgings of Miss Tollbridge were situated, the carriage drove, and reached it almost without the two ladies having exchanged a word.

Miss Tollbridge could not imagine why Judith was so silent, but Judith was not in the least degree aware either of her own silence or that of her companion.

At length Miss Tollbridge and the buns being safely deposited in Store Street, and the door of the house closed upon them, Judith distinctly pronounced the words "No.—Newman Street," and the carriage was again in motion.

It would be no easy task to describe the condition of the young girl during the short interval that now elapsed before the carriage again stopped. It was not without a very considerable effort that she was able to pronounce intelligibly, "Inquire if Mrs. Worthington is at home."

CHAPTER XLII.

THE answer to this interrogatory, given by an exceedingly dirty girl who opened the door, was "Yes, sir," while something, almost amounting to terror, seemed to seize upon her as she gazed on the unwonted spectacle of a smart carriage and footman. "Open the door!" cried Judith, with an impatient movement of her hand.

Thomas obeyed; the carriage door was opened, the steps let down, and in the next instant Judith was in the passage.

"Where is Mrs. Worthington?" said she; for the girl, instead of preceding, suffered her to pass, and then stood staring at her.

"Two pair, front, my lady," was the girl's reply.

Judith darted forward towards the narrow stairs.

"Hadn't I better go up first, Miss?" said Thomas, following her. "It seems a queer place, like, for you to go up alone, Miss."

But Judith declined his services, saying that she knew very well where she was going.

And then with a beating heart and faltering step she pursued her way, determining to be very self-possessed, and not to make any blunder.

Nor did she; for she passed on from the first floor to the second, and, having reached this, she knocked timidly enough at what she knew was the two-pair front door.

A somewhat loud and manly voice replied by the words "Come in."

And then Judith began to wish that Thomas was behind her, for the landing-place was very narrow and very dark, and if it should prove that she had made a mistake, her situation might be very embarrassing. Fortunately, however, she recollected that she had asked for Mrs. Worthington, and that the answer had clearly indicated that some Mrs. Worthington was there; so she took a long breath and all the courage she could find at the same time, and grasping the handle of the door, she turned it resolutely and entered the room.

It would be irrelevant at this moment to relate what she found there, though there might have been much which, under other circumstances, would have seized strongly enough upon her attention; but now there was but one object which could correctly be said to be visible to her, inasmuch as the one only thing she saw was a tall, thin, pale woman in black, who had more of sorrow and of sickness upon her beautiful features than Judith had ever seen before, even at the death-bed of her mother.

And why was it that she so instantly felt persuaded that this pale woman was her aunt? There was not in this case the remotest trace of family resemblance between her and either of her sisters, for she alone was dark-eyed and dark-browed, and, till prematurely silvered, had possessed a pro-

fusion of coal-black hair, of which a Spanish lady might have been proud.

And yet Judith hesitated not for a single instant. It seemed as if her heart rather than her eyes acknowledged the relationship, for after giving one glance round the room, rather as if to see if any person or thing could tell her she was mistaken than to seek for confirmation of her hopes, she bounded forward towards the startled stranger.

But that one rapid glance had shown her much. The aspect of the room was cold and comfortless, and ill-furnished to a degree that plainly announced poverty in its tenants. And this it was which caused the first embrace that Judith ever bestowed on the beloved, the dearly beloved, sister of her mother to be given on her knees.

"Oh! my aunt Penelope!" cried the poor girl, unconsciously expressing in her attitude, her look, her tone, a whole volume of eloquent grief at finding her as she had found her. And there she stopped, and sobbing, almost convulsively, laid her head upon Mrs. Worthington's lap, and covered her hands with kisses.

Why Judith so instantly felt certain that she was in the presence of her aunt it is not very easy to tell; but there is no difficulty in explaining why Mrs. Worthington knew that it was the daughter of her darling sister Judith who knelt before her, for never, perhaps, did a child more accurately picture a parent than Judith did her mother.

But the emotion was too powerful, too sudden, for nerves so shaken and a spirit so broken as those of the poor artist's widow, to endure safely. For one short moment she retained her consciousness, and, bending over the kneeling girl, pressed her pale lips upon her forehead; but the next, she did not bend, but fell, and Judith would scarcely have found sufficient strength to sustain her, had not a pair of arms more powerful than her own suddenly come to her assistance.

Between the two she was gently raised and laid upon the miserable-looking sofa, and then the ordinary remedies of friction and cold water speedily restored her to her senses. But she still looked deadly pale, and Judith was still much alarmed.

"It is passed!" said the young man who stood beside her, tenderly holding one hand of the invalid between both his own. "My mother is not very strong, but this faintness has passed away so quickly, that she will be quite herself again in a moment."

Judith, who till now had stood gazing fixedly on the pale features of her aunt, now raised her eyes to the person who addressed her. This was a tall and, as far as she was able to judge under his very uncouth costume, an extremely handsome young man. But Judith certainly looked at him with rather more surprise than admiration. Had she been familiar with the studios of the continent, or even of England, she would not have been so greatly puzzled to understand why he was dressed so queerly.

To her eyes the effect of his brown holland blouse was exactly that of a waggoner's smock frock, nor could the quantity of dark curls that protruded themselves from beneath the flat cloth cap he wore redeem him from the imputation of being altogether the very strangest-looking person she had ever seen.

There was, however, something in the little caressing ways with which he was taking care of his mother that softened her heart a little, and there was less of quizzing than of kindness in the way in which she said, upon their eyes meeting as they both at the same moment looked up from the face of the invalid towards each other, "And you, then, I suppose, are my cousin Charles?"

This was said with a smile, and was answered in the same manner. "I should think it very likely," said the young man, "if I could persuade myself to believe it possible that a poor artist could be the cousin of so very elegant a young lady."

Judith was, in truth, dressed with very peculiar elegance, a peculiarity, by the way, which she really would never have either sought for or achieved had she been left to herself; but elegance of all sorts, and especially in dress, was the *forte* of Mrs. Dorking. Within a very few hours of her first introduction to her daughter elect, she had gently given her to understand what were the most essential points upon which the fabric of their future family harmony and everlasting affection was to rest. Among these, elegance of toilet of the first class was without scruple brought forward as, perhaps, the most vitally important of all.

Had Frederic Dorking said as much to her, their engagement would have been of very short duration, for Judith, young as she was, was quite conscious that she deserved a better fate than to be made a puppet to hang draperies on.

But she acquitted him most completely of all share in the matter, and only loved him

the better for his compliant deference to the whims and wishes of a mother, whose intellect and character she felt he must have despised, had her influence been of a less sacred character.

For herself, she at once determined that neither her present nor future happiness should be put in peril by her disobedience on such a point as this; and in discussing the subject with Mrs. Chilbert, she had fully agreed with her in thinking that as dear excellent Frederic was so very obedient a son, it was a great blessing that his mother seemed inclined to use her authority chiefly on points too essentially frivolous to have any serious effect on their domestic happiness.

In a word, then, the fact is, that Judith was very elegantly attired; and as her appearance, both as to form and feature, was as remarkable for refinement as for beauty, it was natural enough that the discerning eye of the young artist perceived something in her general appearance with which, as he said, he scarcely felt himself privileged to claim kindred.

And Judith at that moment felt it too, but it was only in such a sort as to make her from her very heart detest the trappings with which they must think she had decorated herself, in order to inspire them with admiration at her greatness.

She blushed to the very deepest tint that the delicate tincture of her complexion would permit as this idea occurred to her, and said, with the look and manner of a person deeply wounded by an offensive observation, "I do beg of you, cousin Charles, not to form your own judgment of me, or lead my dear, dear aunt to form hers, upon the style of my ridiculous dress. It is not of my own choosing. If it had been," she added, relaxing from her look of indignation into a smile, "if it had been, I might have proved to you, perhaps at the very first glance, that I am not so foreign to your kindred as you may fancy. My appearance, in that case, might have had as little of the milliner in it as that of your own dear mother, my precious aunt Penelope!"

And Judith, as she spoke, once more sank on her knees beside her still recumbent aunt, and once more covered her pale hands with kisses.

The young man turned away his head, but not long enough to conceal the fact, that this unexpected tenderness on the part of this fine cousin towards his mother had brought tears into his eyes.

As to the sorrow-worn Mrs. Worthington, she was completely overcome by it, and sobbed almost convulsively as she returned the caresses of her kneeling niece.

"She cannot stand it! Upon my soul, she cannot!" cried poor Charles, looking greatly terrified. "You know not how ill she has been—how long and dreadfully she has suffered—and how utterly reduced she is in strength!"

Judith indeed began to fear that by indulging her own feelings she was too greatly exciting those of her so lately found and so dearly valued aunt, and, suddenly rising, she cast a penitent glance at Charles, and said, "Indeed, indeed, cousin Charles, you must forgive me! If you knew all I have suffered during the terrible months that I have been vainly seeking her, you would not wonder at my losing all command of myself now."

"Have you been seeking her?" cried Charles joyously. "Hear that, mamma!" (the pretty Italian puerility must be pardoned, because it had become habitual to him). "Hear that, mamma! and don't let me see you die for joy, after watching you for so long living in sorrow."

"Have you, indeed, been seeking for me, my sweet girl? My own Judith's Judith, and her own living image! Have you, indeed, been seeking for me?"

"Have I?" cried Judith eagerly. "I have sought you till the not finding you has almost broken my heart. At this very moment, a first attempt is being made at Rome to trace you either there, or to follow you, whithersoever you went, when you left it."

"And your failure, my dear child, is but too intelligible. The last letter that I wrote to your dear mother announced to her our intention of leaving Rome, but it was written before we had at all decided upon the place in which we should fix ourselves. In the first instance we went to Paris, and should probably have remained there, I believe, had not Charles taken it into his head that it was too cold for me in the winter, because it is so difficult to get fuel—at least without very ruinous expense, and I therefore yielded the point, and came to England. But, to say the truth, dearest Judith, my native land is no fitting home for me, or for my dear boy either."

"Oh, do not say that, aunt Worthington!" cried Judith, "because it is my home now, and my home must be your home."

Mrs. Worthington looked at her earnestly,

and there was almost as much surprise as pleasure expressed in that earnest look.

"How comes it, my dear child, that a young creature like you, in all the bright heyday of youth, beauty, and wealth, how comes it that your heart opens to me, like that of a child to its parent, while the hearts of my two sisters, the playfellows and companions of my youth, are closed against me? You have never seen nor known me, Judith. How is it that you love me?"

"Do not say that I have not known you, aunt Penelope!" replied Judith, so eagerly that her vehemence almost choked her utterance. "You do my darling mother great injustice in saying that! I do know you. I have known you all my life; and next to her dear self, and my poor father, I have loved you best. If my sweet mother had been spared to me, and Charles had been brought to see her, would he have felt that she was a stranger to him? that he was a stranger to her? No, no, no, I won't believe it. I will not think so hardly of you, aunt Worthington."

"She is right, dearest mother!" said Charles. "If I had found your dearly beloved sister Judith seated on a throne of gold, with a footstool of ivory and a crown of diamonds, I certainly should have taken the liberty of loving her, in spite of all disparities. Yes, Miss Maitland is quite right in that. But, nevertheless, it makes a dreadful difference, an awful chasm!"

Judith burst into tears. "If he calls me Miss Maitland," said she, "I shall understand perfectly well the sort of intercourse he wishes to establish between us. But he knows not, he cannot know, how very cruel this is! He does not, and cannot know, that after passing almost every hour of my life by the side of a mother, as dear to me as you are to him, I was sent over to a new cold world, where the only relations I found were two maiden aunts, the sisters of my mother, but no more like my mother than I to Hercules. And now—now that I have found the only—" And here the sobs of the impetuous Judith stopped her, from the absolute necessity of taking breath, an interval of which her repentant cousin took advantage; for, with a look that seemed hovering between tragedy and comedy, he came to her, took one of her little hands between both of his, and said, "Now, now I will never call you Miss Maitland more!"

CHAPTER XLIII.

THIS sally at once seemed to set everything right between them, and the joyous smile with which Judith pronounced his pardon, and, as she said, accepted his sworn allegiance, brought an answering smile to the still lovely features of Mrs. Worthington.

"What a strange transition does this little magical half-hour seem to have made in my destiny!" said she, looking with proud fondness in the beautiful face of her niece.

"And what a strange girl you must be to have produced such an effect!" said Charles, also looking earnestly at her; but there was less of unqualified admiration, and more of saucy criticism in his glance.

"I wish you were not so superlatively elegant," said he.

"I have told you that it was not my fault," replied Judith, meekly.

"As you have forbid his being ceremonious, my dear child," said Mrs. Worthington, "you are very likely to find him saucy, particularly in the article of costume, for he fancies that, because he is an artist, he has a right to criticise everything he sees."

"Yes, I know he is an artist!" said Judith, colouring.

On seeing which, Charles Worthington coloured too, and the feeling which caused him to do so showed him to be most profoundly ignorant of all that was going on in the heart of Judith. She already knew him a vast deal better than he knew her.

"Yes! you are an artist, Charles," said she, fixing her eyes more earnestly upon him than she had yet done, and calling to her memory the foreheads of all the artists whose portraits she remembered—Titian, Salvator, Vandyke, Raffael, all rising in succession before her. "Yes," she repeated, "I know he is an artist; and, if he had not been one, I should never have found my way hither."

"As how?" said Mrs. Worthington. "Charles has scarcely made a single acquaintance in London. You surely have not seen any one who mentioned him to you as an artist, Judith."

"No, aunt Penelope, no; that was not the way. But I saw a drawing that told me something about him. I am just come from the Royal Academy."

"Was I not inspired when I made you send in that little Piazza di Spagna sketch?" said Mrs. Worthington. "Then the drawing

pleased you, Judith, and you looked in the catalogue for the name?" she added.

"Exactly so, my dearest aunt," replied Judith. "There was inspiration on his part, and on yours too, I think."

"Inspiration on my part?" said Charles, looking at her with a very evident inclination to laugh. "Are you too an artist, Judith? Or, are you only an amateur?"

"Only an amateur," replied Judith, rather gravely.

"But you must have had a quick eye to notice that little thing," said Mrs. Worthington. "I own I thought it exceedingly clever myself."

"To you it was as a grandchild, my dear mother. To Judith, only a first cousin once removed," said Charles. "Nevertheless, it looks very much like the instinctive tenderness of natural affection, her first looking at so very obscure a little drawing, and then seeking for the name of the artist. Does it not, mother?" said Charles, looking exceedingly pleased.

"It would be a vast deal more civil, cousin Charles, if you said that my notice of it displayed a sort of kindred taste for the art," said Judith.

Young Worthington looked at her for an instant as if he had some notion of answering her seriously, and perhaps of inquiring whether she really did care any thing about art, or not. But if any such thought occurred to him he dismissed it, and replied, "Yes, Judith dear, that would have been the pretty thing to say."

"You idle children!" said Mrs. Worthington, looking at them both affectionately, "might one not think that, instead of our having ten thousand important questions to ask, and answer, you two had as much right to sit and talk nonsense as your two mothers had before you? Be rational, Charles, if you can, and let our Judith tell us where she is, and what chance there may be of her being permitted to cheer us occasionally with her company. Are you living with Barbara and Elfreda, my dear child?"

"I have been living with both," replied Judith, "but I took them by instalments. Do you not know, aunt Penelope, that they have ceased to live together?"

"No, Judith, I neither know that nor any thing else concerning them. They have both treated me from the hour of my marriage with great harshness; and when I wrote to them on the death of my dear husband, I re-

ceived from each a ceremonious note, hoping that I should soon reconcile myself to a loss that was inevitable, but expressing their fears that I should scarcely be likely to find the project of returning to my native country answer, (which I had mentioned as one of the schemes which had suggested itself as a means of educating my son,) because, as far as they were concerned, they could give me no assistance whatever, as everything connected with art, and artists, was (naturally) distasteful to them. These epistles were evidently written in concert, and here ended my correspondence with them."

"And anything very like affectionate correspondence ended soon after between the two spinsters," said Judith. "I rather suspect that they quarrelled a little, too, about me; but this matter was settled by its being arranged that I was to divide my time between them; this friendly compact was speedily deranged again by—— But it is too long a story to tell you now, my dearest aunt. You shall hear that and everything else that concerns me when we have more leisure. The thing that presses now is the great question as to how I am to get at you, and be with you, according to what I flatter myself will be your wish as well as mine."

"It would indeed be dreadful after finding you, and thus finding you, my Judith, to lose you again. But if you are living with my sisters, or with either of them, be very sure that they will use whatever authority is vested in them to prevent our meeting," said Mrs. Worthington; and the flushing of her pale cheek as she spoke told more plainly than her words how much she dreaded the influence of any such power.

"Fear it not, aunt Worthington! fear it not!" returned Judith, firmly. "Neither one nor both of them have any such authority; but, on the contrary, the very holiest authority that can by possibility control me expressly commands me to find you, and to cherish you. The last written and the last spoken words of my dearest mother were to that effect. And where do you think the power is to come from that I shall think of sufficient authority to make me disobey these dying injunctions?"

"Did she, my dear child,—did my poor dear Judith think of me so fondly to the very last?" said Mrs. Worthington, deeply affected.

"All she said on that and many other subjects will both wring and comfort our

hearts by recalling, but what she wrote is safely treasured for your inspection. And I have other things treasured for you, too," said Judith, suddenly recollecting the casket of jewels which had heretofore so troubled her, but of which she now thought with exceeding joy. "I have diamonds for you, aunt Penelope, worth many hundred pounds. And there is one, the finest of all, that mamma said was quite a famous stone; that, too, is very safe, and it is the property of cousin Charles."

"Hundreds!" was the only word uttered by Mrs. Worthington, in reply to this communication, and it was murmured in a low whisper; but her hands were clasped, as, in strong emotion, a bright colour mounted to her cheeks, and her tearful eyes were raised to heaven with an expression of solemn thankfulness.

"Mother!" ejaculated Charles, approaching her, as if frightened by her evident emotion.

"It will save us from all the horrors that were impending over us, my child!" said the agitated mother, seizing his hand, and pressing it to her heart. And then, turning to Judith, she added, "I must make you know some day or other all the depth of the misery from which you have saved us,—from which my poor dear Judith's generous kindness has saved us! You found us very, very wretched, my dear girl; but you will leave us happy—first, from having found one dear kind being among our kindred who does not shrink from owning us; and next, from giving us hope that we may be relieved from a weight of debt that seemed as if it must crush us for ever!"

Judith was too young to appreciate very clearly the degree of poverty to which some hundreds of pounds could bring relief; she only felt the deep delight of having been the agent in doing what she knew her lost mother would have so greatly rejoiced to do. Nor was that all her joy. Her young heart had seemed to die within her, as by degrees the terrible truth had been forced upon her that it was impossible she could love either of the aunts to whose care she had been consigned, and who, nevertheless, had seemed to constitute all that was left to her very loving heart as objects of natural affection.

But now, short as the time had been for bringing such a discovery to perfection, Judith felt, beyond the shadow of doubt, that she had found in Mrs. Worthington one

whom she could cling to, love, and venerate like her own mother. This joy was greater to Judith than it could have been to any one who had not suffered as much as she had done for the want, the hopeless want of it. She felt as if she had not wholly lost her mother.

But even at the very moment that she was looking and feeling the very perfection of heartfelt enjoyment, the loud clock of some neighbouring tower swung out the disagreeable announcement that it was two hours past the noon of day; in short, that within one quarter of an hour the time would arrive at which she had promised Mrs. Dorking to be in perfect readiness to attend her upon some very particularly important visit, when she was to be honoured by permission to present herself to some very magnificent lady, who had promised to arrange a regular admission to Almack's for her.

The success of the negotiation which had led to this most triumphant *dénouement* had been long doubtful; and the immense importance that seemed to be attached to it had led Judith herself to take a degree of interest in the business, which now seemed to her too contemptible to deserve a thought.

But, nevertheless, this feeling could not authorize her breaking any engagement with Mrs. Dorking. She knew it, she felt it, and she positively groaned under the conviction.

"I must go!" she cried, suddenly starting from the place into which she had nestled herself beside her aunt on the dirty little sofa. "Oh, aunt Penelope! It is dreadful to go away when I have so many things to say. But I **MUST** go. I cannot explain to you now how very necessary it is; but you shall know it by and by. Only tell me now when I may come again?"

"When, Judith? Ever and always, dearest! I have no engagements, and Charles not many."

"But what are we to do about aunt Elfreda?" said Judith. "Do you not mean to see her?"

"Will she *let* me see her, Judith? That is the question. Do you feel capable of answering it?"

"Let Judith go, mamma, without attempting to answer it," said Charles, who read in the flushed cheek and agitated manner of his cousin that there was some stringent reason for her immediately going, "and let the answer to this tremendous question be arranged at her next visit."

"Good!" replied his mother. "Let it be so, dearest Judith. This will give me time to think about it."

"To-morrow morning, then," said Judith, hastily yet most tenderly embracing her.

"To morrow morning, dearest," was the reply; and then Judith turned with a hurried step to leave the room, offering to shake hands with her cousin as she did so.

"May I not put you into your carriage, Judith?" he said, colouring, and looking rather anxiously in her face for permission.

Judith gave a glance at his costume, and then, instead of taking her offered hand, he withdrew himself by a quick movement, and began arranging some papers on a table.

But Judith, with all her dutiful eagerness to wait upon her rather imperious mother-in-law elect, was not to be so parted from her newly found cousin. She therefore turned after him, and, putting her hand on his shoulder, she looked playfully in his face, and said, "Charles Worthington, listen to me, for I am in a great hurry. If you and I put our heads together, and never quarrel, never get into a pet with one another about any thing, I think, in the end, we may be able to manage this aunt Elfreda of ours, who is a more terrible dragon to me, remember, than she ever can be to you, for she has got a legal power over me, and may lock me up, I believe, if she likes it. So you must submit, for my sake, dearest cousin, to be careful and cautious. That dress of yours looks classical, very, and, upon the whole, I think it is rather picturesque, BUT you must not let my footman Thomas see you in it *as yet*."

There was considerable tact, considerable appreciation of character, manifested by Judith in this address, and it was all wanted; for had she failed in making him feel that they were conspiring together against their spinster aunt, Judith's dread of the effect of his working dress upon her footman might have been very fatal to the affectionate feeling she was so anxious to immediately establish between them. But as she had managed it, all was well, and he saw her depart down the dark stairs alone, exactly in the frame of mind that she wished to leave him in.

CHAPTER XLIV.

BUT what a strangely-altered creature was Judith when she entered her carriage, from what she had been when she entered it last. Every object she cast her eyes upon seemed

changed; her estimate of all things seemed changed too. Every thing that had seemed of the most extreme importance to her yesterday, all appeared too contemptibly trivial to-day to merit a thought. A species of awe, and it must be confessed that it was of rather a childish kind, still made her feel anxious not to keep Mrs. Dorking waiting. But as to all the rest, as to the importance of the business they were going upon, the value of its success, or the vexation that would be caused by its failure, her estimate of the whole thing was so completely changed, that she would have found it difficult, had she set about it, even to recall what her feelings on the matter had really been the day before. But it was not thus she employed herself during the whole of her rather long drive from Newman to Green Street.

She did not forget Mrs. Dorking, but she very soon forgot the peeress she was to be taken to visit; she forgot Almack's, too, and all things connected with it.

Her whole heart and soul were full of her aunt Worthington and her concerns. Her delicate health, her obvious poverty, the deep distress of which she had spoken, all pressed upon her heart, and caused a sensation of deeper anxiety than she had ever felt before.

"Oh, my poor mother!" she murmured; "how right were you in lamenting your inability to divide the fortune left to me! How gladly, oh! how joyfully, would I share it with them, had I the power. But the time will come."

But as this thought arose, another followed it, and a most strange medley of emotions came after.

Till that moment, Judith had never given a serious thought to all the business part of a matrimonial connexion. She knew that she had plenty of money, and she knew that her dear Frederic had plenty of money also, and, moreover, that he was to have a great deal more by and by. She knew all this perfectly well, and, as far as she had ever thought about it at all, she thought it was very nice. But till the very present moment of which we are speaking, it had never entered her head to ask herself if she should, out of all this, have any independent power of doing good to any one. Decidedly one of the greatest pleasures she had felt, arising from her residence in London, had been created by the satisfaction, and the amusement also, of seeing poor Miss Tollbridge

gradually growing comfortable in her little domicile; but her liberal good nature on this occasion had never exceeded in its expense the trifling amount that any person of good fortune might naturally think themselves entitled to command for such a purpose, whether married or single. But now the case was widely different. The nearest and dearest kindred she had in the world were evidently suffering from great poverty; and the question she now asked herself was, whether her engagement to Frederic Dorking had for ever put it out of her power to give them effectual and permanent assistance.

She was no great lawyer, but yet she knew enough to feel pretty uncomfortably sure that it had, and for a moment or two she felt most profoundly miserable; the tears ran unchecked down her cheeks, and her bosom heaved with sighs that amounted very nearly to sobs; nor was it till her carriage had reached that corner of Grosvenor Square which was nearest to her aunt's lodgings, that the bright idea occurred to her that her dear Frederic, who was everything most perfect in man, would unquestionably become as much attached to the only relations she had, whom she should even ask him to love, as she was herself.

"Dear, dear Frederic!" she exclaimed, as the carriage stopped at her aunt's door. "How shamefully unjust I have been to doubt him even for a moment; or, rather, how worse than unjust was I for a single moment to forget him!"

This set everything right again in that gay and innocent young heart; and when she learned from Miss Elfreda's footman that Mrs. Dorking's carriage had not yet been there, she felt herself so infinitely relieved, that she was quite ready to declare herself fearless of the future in all ways, and perfectly certain that Frederic and herself would make one of the happiest couples in the world, despite all the finery of his relations and the poverty of hers.

Mrs. Dorking came at last, full of apologies for being so unpunctual, and, seeing the apologies received with such radiant good humour by Judith, she felt more than ever inclined to rejoice at the happy series of accidents which had led Frederic to choose a wife, who, besides the pleasant advantage of possessing two thousand a-year, was one of those tempers that one can do anything with, if one does but set about it in the right way.

There was one peculiarity in the system of Miss Elfreda Jenkyns, in her code of spinster government, which proved at this time a very great accommodation to Judith. The principle which she made the leading star of her guardian tactics was this,—that her management should be in all respects as great a contrast to that of her sister Barbara as possible. She knew, by tolerably long experience, that the ways and manners of Miss Barbara (excepting in the special case of Dr. Wroughtley) were always cold, and often repulsively harsh, especially to young people; and it was for this reason that she had assumed in her manner to Judith a tone so caressing as to require the use of all the "angels" and "darlings" that have been repeated after her.

Another of Miss Barbara's characteristics was the fidgety curiosity which propelled her to inquire into everybody's "whereabouts," so as to make it nearly impossible for any of her acquaintance to perform any of the usual affairs of life, without Miss Barbara's making herself acquainted with the why, how, and where.

Now Miss Elfreda perfectly well remembered how very much she used to hate this herself in days of yore, and to "avoid it altogether," in her own conduct towards the *precious Judith*, was her earnest wish and constant study.

Hitherto this had been of but little importance to her young ward, but now she felt it to be invaluable.

It was not that Judith had the slightest intention of making any mystery about the near and dear relations she had been so fortunate as to stumble upon; but after all that had passed between the two aunts now in London, it could not have failed to be very embarrassing had it been the habit of Elfreda to cross-examine her niece upon the sayings and doings of every passing day.

At the present moment, in particular, when Mrs. Worthington had so reasonably asked for time for a little consideration respecting the future, it would have been very difficult to obtain it for her, had the elder sister been the guardian for the time being instead of the younger.

And most thankful was Judith for it, and deeply did she bless the arrangement which left her the entire control over the carriage during the early part of the day; for she knew it would enable her on the morrow, and on many subsequent morrows, to devote her-

self for three good hours, at the very least, to her dearly cherished aunt Penelope, and to the heart-full of new feelings, new interests, and new pleasures which this dear and close alliance would bring about.

Miss Elfreda had on that evening an engagement to one of the very pleasant *soirées*, four of which were given every season at the house of Mr. Carey, the celebrated lecturer; and Judith had anticipated this engagement, which occurred once a fortnight, with much pleasure, Frederic Dorking having promised to avail himself of Miss Elfreda's interest in procuring him an invitation.

But every thing seemed to favour Judith, as if Fate had taken pity on the over-excited state of her spirits, for, while the aunt and niece were at dinner, a note was given to Judith from her *fiancé*, begging her to make his apologies, both to Miss Elfreda and the Carey family, for being unable to keep his engagement.

For her own particular share, he added all that could be said of tenderest, and prettiest, on such a theme.

Had nothing particular occurred that morning to Judith, this might perchance have vexed her; but, as it was, she hailed Frederic's imperative engagement, let it be what it might, as a real blessing. And thus, for probably the first time in her life, she affected what she did not feel, and played a little comedy of being vexed, as she asked her aunt Elfreda to excuse her too.

Miss Elfreda's part upon this, as upon all other occasions, was that of the perfect species of maiden aunt, which never permits itself to be in the way on any occasion, and whose only perceptible object in life is to do every thing it is wanted to do, and no more.

On receiving this petition from Judith for leave of absence, she nodded, and smiled, and winked a good deal, but never uttered a syllable by way of remonstrance; the only words, in fact, which she uttered being, "You darling angel! every thing you do is exactly what you ought to do!"

And when this most amiable of maiden aunts was gone, did not poor Judith enjoy her solitude? How quietly delicious, and how deliciously quiet was her solitary tea! And, in truth, if the having much interesting matter to think of can make solitude valuable, that of Judith must needs have been so.

It required no great continuity of meditation, however, to make her decide that her

mother's darling sister Penelope was not to continue in such a state of utter discomfort as she had found her. "No! not if I beg alms for her, and myself too, to prevent it!" was her mental exclamation.

But the manner how, and the means by which, this continuance of poverty was to be cured, were points of greater difficulty.

Even if she had not been engaged to be married to dear Frederic Dorking, she would, for four years to come, be as helpless as to any power of giving them effectual assistance as she was now.

What then was to be done? They were in distress, in positive pecuniary distress, nay, moreover, they were in debt; and the grief and anxiety arising from this was killing her aunt Penelope!

"And what resources have I at my command?" was the pertinent question that Judith asked herself. "I have three hundred a-year for my private expenses, one half of which I have agreed to make over to my aunt Elfreda, in addition to the six hundred she receives for me, in consideration of my having a carriage, horses, coachman, footman, and maid at my command. And these luxuries are not too highly paid for, Mrs. Chilbert says. It follows, then, that all I can convert to the use of my poor suffering aunt, is just the paltry trifle I may be able to save from the clutches of Milliners and Co. This will not do, most elegant and most indulgent aunt Elfreda! If I consent to roll about behind the shadow of my rose-coloured blinds, with a fine coachman before, a fine footman behind, and a fine maid to relieve me from the burden of my mantle when I re-enter my room, while my own dear mother's own dear sister is living in such a room as that which I have seen to-day, may I perish by the slow agony of starvation on a bed of straw!"

Such were the energetic words into which the thoughts of Judith formed themselves, as she thus sat in solitary meditation in her aunt Elfreda's drawing-room. And the firmness of the resolution, thus firmly expressed, did her good. It was as if she had found a friend to help her in the work she meant to undertake.

And she had found a friend; she had found one in herself, in her own honest earnestness, in the conscious righteousness of her object, and in the resolute strength of purpose with which she meant to put it in practice.

But her solitary musings did not come to

an end here, nor was it time they should, for all the detail difficulties of the business were still to be thought of, and provided for, and few young ladies, rising seventeen, are likely to find this task much easier than poor Judith did.

The putting down the carriage, and dismissing the two men servants, would have gone far towards achieving all she wished to achieve at the present moment.

"When I am of age," thought she, "my beloved Frederic will, I feel quite sure, enable me to put every thing on a proper footing at once. But I cannot deal with the Lord Chancellor, whom aunt Barbara was so fond of talking about, as I could with my dear Frederic. So, for a real settling of every thing, we must wait, at least till I am married. But what is to be done meanwhile? What is to be done immediately?"

Something like a vision of the face, form, attitude, and voice of the elegant Mrs. Dorking, upon being informed that the honoured *protégée*, who was one day to become her still more honoured daughter, had discovered some poor relations, on whose account she had decided upon giving up her carriage,—something like a vision of this kind seemed to rise to her mind's eye, but she did not quail before it; for Dr. Wroughtley was right; there was a good deal of self-willed determination about Judith.

Moreover, she had common sense enough to tell her, that her soft darling and angel-tongued aunt Elfreda might be a much more troublesome obstacle to her plans than Mrs. Dorking.

The allowance made for her accommodation was, of course, to be expended according to the judgment of her appointed guardian; and though Miss Elfreda's judgment had suggested to her a much more liberal style of expenditure than that adopted by her aunt Barbara, she had no great reason to believe that she would be more docile in giving up the carriage, than her aunt Barbara would have been in keeping one.

And then the poor harassed girl's fancy fixed itself on all that might be, and all that certainly would be, if Elfreda would only consent to receive and treat Mrs. Worthington like a sister! How comfortably might they all live together! If London were too costly, why not remove into the country? And for a few short minutes, Judith sat smiling at the pretty picture she was drawing for herself, with a cottage sort of home, large

enough to give a studio to Charles, and with cows, and chickens, and a pony-carriage

But she misdoubted her fond aunt Elfreda in her heart. And she soon gave up the cottage project with a hopeless sigh.

Her thoughts then turned to Frederic Dorking, to her affianced husband, and there they fixed themselves.

The more she meditated, the more she became convinced that it was to him she ought to look for assistance. From him she ought to have no secrets, and she would have none. Every part of his conduct had given her the strongest reason to have faith in his affection, his disinterestedness, and his generosity. She could want no other friend than him, and she would seek no other.

Her spirits rose as she thought of all this. Here there could be no harshness, no attempt at severe authority. The pleasure of doing all she proposed to do would be equally great to all the parties concerned, and the happiness of all the inevitable result.

Having come at length to this most comfortable conclusion, she very rationally determined to go to bed, and did so, just in time to escape Miss Elfreda's raptures on the delightful evening she had passed, surrounded by every thing that could make life desirable, and in the society of men who really made one feel proud of belonging to the same species.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE faithful carriage of Judith, the carriage that the poor girl was so heartily anxious to get rid of, arrived punctually at ten o'clock according to her orders; but it wanted at least ten minutes of that time when Judith re-entered her room after breakfast, and, having dismissed her maid, took from the deepest recess of her best-locked trunk the precious casket that we described her as keeping guard over, six or seven months before, at the railway hotel, when waiting to take her departure thence for Southampton with her aunt Barbara.

Judith was as jealous about this casket now as she was then; and, in order to prevent the possibility of its being carried down stairs by any officious domestic who might come to announce the carriage, she stood with it in her arms at the open window, ready to start the instant that the said carriage turned the corner round which she knew it must come in its way from the mews.

By this precaution, she succeeded in placing herself and her treasure safely in the vehicle, without a single confidant in the manœuvre, except the footman, who was so far made a party as to lend his hand in placing the heavy little box upon the seat.

This done, she quietly named the number and the street of her aunt Worthington's residence, with a feeling of happiness at her heart powerful enough in its youthful brightness to render her perfectly blind to all the difficulties which still lay in her way, before that dearly beloved aunt could be placed as much beyond the reach of poverty, as it was her steadfast resolve to place her.

Punctual as was the moment of Judith's arrival to the promise she had given, she did not come before she was eagerly expected; but yet, when she did come, both mother and son were ready to confess that she was come before they had dared to hope for her.

The opening of the casket added little, or indeed nothing, to the information which Judith had already given them respecting its contents; for neither of the party had the slightest idea of their value, beyond what they had received from the dying statements of Judith's mother. This, however, was enough to make the poor widow feel, as she received them, that she and her son were saved, at least for the present, from a pressure more severe than either of them wished to communicate to the bright-spirited, warm-hearted, and affectionate young creature who had seemed to come upon them like an angel of light.

"Oh! how thankful I am to have delivered it safe at last!" exclaimed Judith, playfully laying her aunt's hand upon it, in an attitude of possession. "You know not how sorely it has troubled me,—or rather, how sorely I have been troubled by so long seeking in vain for the dear being who was to replace my mother. But I will not complain. Perhaps I should not have enjoyed my happiness so much, had it come to me with no previous suffering."

"My dear, dear Judith!" cried Mrs. Worthington, looking at her with fond and melancholy recollection of the mother she so greatly resembled, "what is your happiness compared to mine? I fear I can bring little but sorrow and anxiety to you, while you bring to me all that is left on earth, except my poor boy, that I may dare to think of with affection."

"And do you, and will you, think of me

with affection, aunt Penelope?" said Judith, tenderly embracing her. "You know not the happiness you make me feel in teaching me to hope for this! And you, too, Master Charles, you must love me, too, if you please. Do you like me to-day better than you did yesterday?" she added, standing up before him, and deliberately turning herself round for his inspection.

The meaning of which facetious manœuvre was explained by the fact, that the dress of Judith on this occasion was as studiously simple, though still elegant and costly, (for she had never had the means of dressing herself otherwise,) as yesterday it had been the reverse.

There are some ladies, though none, perhaps, quite so young as Judith, who seem to take extreme delight in the very act of dressing. I well remember having some years ago encountered a London *élégante* of the very first class three times, between the hours of two and seven, at three different places of fashionable morning resort, and, equally to my amusement and surprise, she appeared that morning in three completely different costumes.

That this lady found the act of dressing agreeable cannot be doubted, but it was not so with Judith; and therefore, when she took it into her busy little head the day before, that she should like to go herself and take Miss Tollbridge to the exhibition of the Royal Academy, she avoided the trouble of dressing a second time for her fine visit, by investing herself in the sort of morning attire which Mrs. Dorking had given her to understand she approved, before she set forth on her early expedition.

Now, considering that a strong partiality for a simple style of dress was one of Judith's most marked peculiarities, it certainly must have been rather vexatious to her to find herself rebuked for being too fine at her very first interview with her artist cousin. And this was the reason why she now so humbly submitted herself to his critical scrutiny, in the hope of hearing that he thought her appearance improved.

Nor was she disappointed. Charles appeared to understand her challenge, and surveyed her with a very grave and critical eye.

"Yes," said he, "I like you better to-day than I did yesterday. At least, I like your dress better."

"Well! even that is a comfort," said Ju-

dith, laughing. "I dare say we shall get on together very well, in time."

"I dare say we shall, if you are attentive and obedient," he replied. "But look you here, cousin Judith!" And, in saying this, he opened a book of sketches that lay, for want of a table, upon a deal plank, which he had very unceremoniously set up in their only sitting-room to serve all the purposes of a library table, only that instead of the customary preparations for writing, all sorts of things preparatory to painting, and to drawing, were arranged upon it.

"Look here! Let me begin this branch of your education immediately. Instead of bedecking themselves with satin and lace, as you did yesterday, young girls should be attired in this fashion." And then he turned over, for her inspection, page after page of graceful and very spirited sketches, in which every variety of Greek and Italian costume recurred again and again in all the various groups with which the volume was filled.

There was a little curl on the lip of Judith as he turned the first pages of his book, proceeding probably from a feeling that her young cousin was supremely absurd in gravely recommending to a young lady living in England to deck herself in what certainly appeared to her to be the very prettiest fancy costumes that ever were seen; but before he had proceeded far, his mother called to him, and, instantly obeying her call, he laid the open book on the deal board before his cousin, and left her.

Judith seized upon it eagerly, and began most completely to enjoy herself; and, in truth, it was a volume that might have charmed a more experienced eye, and a more learned taste, than those of Judith; for it had that unforgeable *timbre* which no sketch-book, save that of a born and bred artist, ever had. Every line, nay, every dot, had had its especial mission; and yet the things, for the most part, looked as if they had been thrown upon the pages more in sport than in study.

But Judith was not quite unworthy of the indulgence either; and though she could by no means expatiate in artistic phrase upon the especial touches that so enchanted her, she felt a charm to which her organization rendered her peculiarly alive; and before Charles returned to the deal board, and its fair visitor, her estimate of her cousin's talent as an artist had reached a very high point.

"Heyday! Miss Judith, what are you doing there? Nobody, not even my mother, I believe, ever took such liberties with my sketch-book as you seem to be taking now. Why you are looking at every thing!"

"And I always shall look at every thing in every sketch-book that you put into my hands, cousin Charles," replied Judith, without raising her eyes from the book, and preparing herself very comfortably to go on with her examination of it.

"But do you not know that you are at this moment rifling, in a most unwarrantable manner, the storehouse of my most secret thoughts and reveries?" said Charles, bending his brows upon her with an awful frown.

"And very pretty thoughts and reveries they are; and I give you notice that, if you mean to keep them secret from me, you must put them completely and effectually out of my reach," replied Judith. But though the remonstrances of her cousin did not stop her, her conscience did; and suddenly closing the volume, she said, "You have a right to be angry with me, dearest aunt, though he has not. Did I not come here to talk to you on subjects most vitally important to us all? And this is the way I do it!"

"Come here, then, dearest, and sit by me," returned her aunt, "and we will waste no more time at present on the study of costumes. Of course you have said nothing about us, as yet, to my sister Elfreda?"

"Not a syllable," replied Judith. "But I have been thinking a great deal about it; and it seems to me, aunt Worthington, that the proper thing to do is to tell her at once that you are here. Let us hope that she will be too wise to recur to any thing painful that has passed between you formerly. You, I am quite sure, are too good and too kind to do it. And, if this can be altogether avoided, I see not why every thing may not go on smoothly amongst us all."

"I would fain believe it possible, dearest, and it shall not be my fault, Judith, if it prove otherwise. But even if she should refuse to see me herself, she surely will not have the cruelty of using her authority in any way that may prevent my seeing you."

"She would find that a very difficult task indeed," said Judith, laughing, "for, perhaps it is as well for you to know it at once, I am a very self-willed obstinate sort of person. I do not believe that I would willingly commit any very great sin; but, all jesting apart, I am conscious of a very strong feeling

within me of resistance against what I think to be an unreasonable use of authority. For instance, I have it here, under my dear mother's own hand, that it is her earnest and her dying wish that I should seek you and love you. Now I know of no authority under heaven, aunt Penelope, which could exonerate me from the moral necessity of obeying this command, and I will obey it, to the very utmost extent of my power."

Both her auditors had been looking at her earnestly as she said this. Her aunt drew her towards her, threw her arms round her neck, and kissed her fondly.

Charles turned suddenly away, and occupied himself by arranging the miscellaneous articles upon his deal board.

"I would not urge, nor even encourage you in rebellion to any constituted authority to which you are submitted, my dearest Judith," replied her aunt; "but it surely is a great, as well as a greatly needed, comfort to hear you express yourself so affectionately towards me; and I certainly feel, as you do, that your mother's wishes will more than justify some resistance to any authority that may attempt to keep you from me. But, before we think of resistance, let us think of conciliation. How shall I set about it, Judith? Should I call upon her?"

"Will you promise not to think me very impertinent, if I tell you how I think it all ought to be?" said Judith, colouring, and looking really ashamed of the presumption.

"Your being young, and my being old, my child, has less to do in assigning us our respective parts on this occasion, than the circumstance of your knowing how things stand here, and my not knowing," replied Mrs. Worthington.

"That is what I feel about it, aunt," returned Judith, with an air of great contentment; "and if cousin Charles will amuse himself by taking a walk the while, for we must positively have a *tête-à-tête*, I will open all my plans to you."

Charles turned round, and gave her rather a reproachful look, that seemed to say that he too should like to listen to her plans; but, nevertheless, he kissed his hand very gaily and gallantly and then vanished.

"Now then, my sweet girl!" said Mrs. Worthington, placing the one crazy-looking footstool so as to assist them both in the difficult task of not slipping off the horse-hair sofa. "Now then!"

CHAPTER XLVI.

"Now then, dear aunt!" said Judith, yielding herself, and with tolerable success too, to the hospitable effort of making her comfortable, "Now then! I think we are very snug, and I think I shall have courage to tell you everything."

"Courage!" said Mrs. Worthington, with a look and tone of surprise.

"Do not be frightened," returned Judith, laughing. "It is nothing very bad, I believe; indeed, every body tells me it is quite the contrary. But in any case, aunt Penelope, the truth is, that I am going to be married."

Fortunately the eyes of Judith were fixed on the floor when she said this. Had she been looking in her aunt's face she must have perceived a look of blended surprise and sorrow.

"You are young, my Judith! you are very young to rush upon all the troubles of life already," said she.

"Oh, yes; I am too young," replied Judith, "and for that reason I am not going to be married for several months yet. I am not to be married till I am in my eighteenth year, and that, you know, won't be so very, very early. But I do assure you that it is the very luckiest thing in the world, for Frederic Dorking—that is his name, aunt—Frederic Dorking loves me much too dearly not to rejoice at my having found you. He knows full well how I have longed to do so."

"Well, my sweet girl, if he loves you, and you love him, I must, perforce, rejoice that so it is to be," said her aunt, making an effort to recover herself, both from her astonishment and a sort of feeling of having again in some sort lost the sweet creature she had so lately found.

And now Judith, the ice being broken, went on to detail the plans she had concocted over her solitary tea the evening before.

She felt, poor child, that till she knew her aunt's actual position as to her present means of existence, she could not explain her own plans very fully; but she ventured to say that it was evident to her, that it had now become her duty to spend her money more carefully, for that she was quite sure that neither she nor dear Charles had as much as they ought to have.

"You shall know every thing, Judith; and one great use of this will be the proving to

you, my dear child, that you must not dream of injuring your own fortune,—which, indeed, you have no longer any right to do,—by any attempt to improve ours. All that is really and immediately distressing in our situation will, I hope and expect, be relieved by the sale of the jewels which you have brought to us at a most critical moment; and, as to our subsequent position, I flatter myself that, young as you are, I shall be able to make you understand that any attempt on your part to alter that would be exceedingly unwise, and, what is still more to the purpose, utterly vain.”

For a minute or two Judith was profoundly silent, but, judging from the expression of her features, her thoughts were not idle; and there was a contraction of the brow, a heightening of complexion, and a sort of resolution in the eye, that might have made one wish that she would have broken the silence, for there was evidently a great deal passing within.

After this minute or two, she seemed to think that her aunt was expecting her to speak, and she therefore said, in a very gentle, docile, lady-like tone, “Tell me at once, aunt Penelope, all that you think it right for me to know, and then I will tell you all that I know myself.”

“I might make a long story of it, my dear child, but I will not. If we have future opportunities of conversing together, I may enter more into detail,” said Mrs. Worthington.

“If!” said Judith, with a still greater contraction of her brow.

“I said *if*, dearest, because I have lived long enough to know the extreme uncertainty of every thing,” replied Mrs. Worthington.

“I have not lived very long, certainly,” returned Judith, by no means relaxing the stern expression of her youthful face, “but I feel very strongly persuaded that all the things that happen in this world are not left to chance; no, nor to the special intervention of Providence over-ruling them either. I feel strongly persuaded, aunt Worthington, that God, who has done nothing in vain, would not put into our hearts so much sincerity of purpose, so much steadfastness of resolution, if he denied us all power of influencing the result.”

Mrs. Worthington looked at her earnestly for a moment, and smiled. “You are very like your dear mother,” said she; “but yet

I doubt if you are like her in all ways. She was the most yielding creature I ever knew. What was the temper of your father Judith?”

“My father was a very resolute person,” said Judith, colouring. “But pray go on, aunt; I have interrupted you.”

“You know, at least, the beginning of my history,” said Mrs. Worthington; “you know that I eloped with my drawing-master. I should be very sorry to hear that you, Judith, or any other young person for whom I was interested, had eloped with any one; but, notwithstanding that I avow it to have been an indiscretion, I cannot but add that I never, during the life-time of my husband, regretted for a single moment that I had become his wife.”

“Then your steadfastness of purpose was rewarded,” said Judith.

Mrs. Worthington smiled, but shook her head, as she replied, “The punishment came after! While my dear husband lived, I really believe I was as perfectly happy as it is possible for any human being to be. I gloried in his talent, which was appreciated by all the first judges in Rome, and during these years of happiness he might have realized much money, had the sale of his drawings been an important object. But it really was not, for my husband, who had not a vice in the world, nor even an amusement in which I did not share, was, as well as myself, perfectly satisfied with the income my fortune brought us; and it was only when he was anxious to procure me some particular indulgence, such as taking me to Venice, to Bologna, to Florence, to Naples, that we might enjoy the delight of seeing pictures together, it was only for such extra expenses as these that he would consent to sell his drawings at all; and then the prices he obtained were very high. At last, however, these happy days came to a sudden check, arising from a speculation upon which he entered with more than his usual ardour, and less than his usual prudence. A collection of pictures, which had been brought to Rome by a bold and skilful adventurer, were exposed for sale, or rather were partially exposed for sale, for the proprietor, declaring that he knew his business too well to lower the market by over-stocking it, refused to show the entire collection to any one. Amongst those that were shown were some of very first-rate excellence, and for these great prices were offered by both Russian and English amateurs; but these offers were refused, the owner declaring that it was not

his purpose to sell the gems of his collection, but one-third of the whole gallery *en masse*; and that it was not with Russian or English nobles that he wished to deal, but with professional men, whose object was to sell again, and who would know how to make the speculation answer, by exhibiting them throughout Europe first, and then throughout America.

This idea seized upon the imagination of my dear husband. Our son was already longing for an opportunity to travel, and he knew that I enjoyed nothing so much. In an evil hour he entered into a negotiation with the travelling picture-dealer, and was beguiled at length into taking the whole of his collection, on terms that certainly seemed most advantageous, but which nevertheless amounted, within a very few hundred pounds, to the whole of my fortune. The whole was accordingly sold out of the funds, and my husband became the possessor of a very large but very miscellaneous gallery.

As long as the negotiation was pending, his eagerness about it prevented his paying any attention to minor details, or he might have perceived before it was concluded, what he speedily became aware of afterwards, namely, that the first cost was not all the cost necessary to put his acquisition in a condition to render it profitable. Details on such a subject must be worse than useless, dear Judith. The result of it all was, that we not only spent the few hundreds that were left, but got very considerably in debt before the collection was brought into a condition to make any profit from it. Many of the pictures, though of great merit, were found to be in so deplorable a condition, that it was doubtful if they were capable of reparation. And then came—the last, worst blow of all! The fatigue, the anxiety, the doubt, were altogether too much for him. My husband died.”

Judith, who knew that this catastrophe was to come, for the sad story was of course not wholly new to her, had been watching her aunt with great anxiety; and not without cause, for she became as pale as death when she pronounced these last words, and the frightened girl thought she would have fainted.

But she recovered herself by a strong effort, and, after the silence of a moment or two, she said, “You know all now, my dear child; the rest is comparatively nothing. The collection of pictures which caused all our misery is still at Rome. They have

been seized for debts which I was totally unable to pay. We were enabled to make the journey hither, and to exist in this little lodging for the last few months, by the sale of—of what I never intended should be sold at all; and now our future hopes rest, or rather did rest before the arrival of my poor sister’s legacy, upon the hope that my poor Charles might sell some of his pretty spirited sketches. But now, thank Heaven, and you, my dear child, all these minor sorrows are over, and we may fairly look forward to paying our Roman debts by the sale of these jewels, and then to the disposing of the pictures which are now detained from us for a sum that, with the aid of my boy’s talent, may enable us to live. May we not in every way, my dearest Judith, bless the hazard that has brought you to us?”

“It was not altogether hazard, aunt Worthington. I am rather proud to think that my family—feeling for art had something to do with it. Had not that sketch of my dear clever cousin’s delighted me, I should never have found out his name in the catalogue.”

“And there is pleasure in that thought, too, Judith,” said her aunt, looking at her very affectionately. “And now, my dear love,” she continued, “you know every thing about us. It is now my turn to listen. Let me know every thing about you.”

“And so you shall, aunt Penelope; my inclination, as well as my duty, will prevent my having any secrets from you. But before I begin this auto-biography, let me say one little word to you, not about my history, but myself. You told me just now that I was very young—too young to be married. I believe you are very right. I think it very possible that I am too young to be married, but I am not too young to feel, nor am I too young to know, that dearly as I love Frederic Dorking, and truly as I believe that he loves me, I would rather part with him to-morrow, with the certainty of never seeing him again, than continue to live as I am living *now*, while you are living as you must be living *here*. Aunt Worthington, there is no use in arguing the matter,” she added, perceiving that her aunt shook her head, and appeared to be about to interrupt her. “I know myself better than you can know me, and, be it right or be it wrong, I have neither the will nor the power to arrest the movement which urges me to do what I am about to do. I will not tell you, my own dear mother’s own sister, that you do not know how dear you

were to her ; I will not tell you that, because it might be doing injustice to both of you ; but I may, at least, tell you that it is impossible you can know how thoroughly she made me understand that you had ever been her second self, — her *second self*, aunt Worthington ! And if I feel this in the very depth of my heart and soul, would you tell me that I am to be waited upon like a duchess, clothed like a princess, and carried about in a fine equipage like an empress, while my dear mother's *other self* lives here ? No, no ! You would not tell me so, aunt Worthington. Nor, were the case reversed, would you tell my cousin Charles that he should so treat my mother."

"You are a strange girl, Judith !" said Mrs. Worthington, looking at her with almost as much curiosity as affection, "and I protest I know not how to talk to you. Nevertheless you will find it very difficult to persuade me that it would be right to permit you to give up your present place in society, which is yours, as I may say, by the express will of your father, in order to raise my son, and me, from that which is in truth ours. Cannot you understand me, Judith ? Cannot you see the question in this light ?"

"Yes, certainly I can," replied Judith, without the slightest hesitation ; "and if you will not seek to dazzle and overwhelm me with your particular light, I think our respective illuminations may help each other, and that at last we shall both of us see this matter clearly. I have not the very least idea, my dearest aunt, of giving up the place in society which, as you truly say, I hold by the will of my father. Even if I were not going to marry a very wealthy man, I should not, according to my scheme, be in the least danger of doing this. I do not propose, aunt Worthington, to leave my present gay-looking pretty home in order to take up my abode here. I know no reason whatever why I should do so. All I propose to do is, to furnish you with the means to live as my mother's second self ought to live, until such time as your own resources may enable you to do so without assistance from me. And I am glad to say that, in order to do this, there will be no occasion for me to give up any thing except mere luxuries, which, as you well may guess, would be no longer luxuries to me, if the retaining them involved the necessity of your remaining in discomfort. The only possible difficulty in the business lies in the convincing my aunt Elfreda

that, out of the six hundred a-year which she receives for my accommodation, she ought to permit me to dispose of about two hundred. If she will consent to this, I will take excellent care that she shall lose nothing by it. But I am quite ready to confess that I do not feel sure of her. However, I do feel sure that I shall find a friend in my dear Frederic, who will assist me in convincing her that I ask nothing that is unreasonable. But even at the very worst, aunt Worthington, I am already so far independent, that I can at least assist you to the amount of two hundred and fifty pounds a-year, which will be leaving me fifty for finery, a sum which, as Charles can tell you, is greatly beyond what is necessary to enable me to dress according to his notions of good taste, and my own too. And now I must leave you, aunt Worthington, for I have a great deal to do. First, I must see my aunt Elfreda, and find what I can do with her, in the way of making her behave to you as she ought to do. Next I must see my dear Frederic, and there I anticipate nothing but sympathy and comfort. And then I must look for another lodging and a nice comfortable servant for you. In short, I can stay chattering here no longer ! so good-bye !"

"Stay, Judith, stay," exclaimed her aunt, seriously alarmed at the energy with which she seemed disposed to settle everything her own way. "Indeed you must not be so impetuous." But Judith, after for one moment throwing her arms round her, and pressing her lips upon her forehead, made her escape, and was not only at the bottom of the stairs, but actually in the carriage, before Mrs. Worthington had sufficiently recovered her composure to attempt making any effort to stop her.

CHAPTER XLVII.

JUDITH was by no means insensible to the fact, that her projects would not all be brought to perfection without some difficulty, but she felt strong in the conviction that her purpose was to do nothing but what was right ; and, steadfast as she was in this purpose, it was with truly pious humility that she addressed a fervent prayer to Heaven for judgment to direct her in the difficult task that lay before her. But, in spite of all her courage, it may be doubtful whether she felt more sorry or more glad at being told, upon inquiring for her aunt Elfreda, that she was in the drawing-room, and alone.

She gave herself no time, however, to discuss this question, but, breathing another prayer for success, she at once entered the room.

The fond relative she found there seemed enchanted by her unexpected arrival.

"My lovely darling!" she exclaimed, "this is a greater happiness than I had dared to hope for. Where has your young philosophy been leading you, dearest? Not to the busy haunts of men, I hope, with that marvellously simple toilet? Of course, you have had our good Tollbridge with you?"

"My dearest aunt," returned Judith, approaching her with a mixture of affection and solemnity in her manner, which was immediately felt by the puzzled spinster, "my dear, dear aunt, if the news I bring you should create in your heart one-half of the joy it has created in mine, we shall be the happiest pair of ladies in London!"

"What on earth can you mean, my beloved child? Nothing has been said, has there? Oh! I dare not hope it. Nothing has been mentioned, my sweet Judith, about the possibility of my obtaining one ticket for Almack's? I did just breathe the longing wish I had for it into the ear of your devoted Frederic, and he is such a very charming creature, that, if it be possible to do it, I think it will be done by him. But don't keep me in suspense, my angel! I shall positively die if you do."

"My dearest aunt," replied Judith, "I know not even what you mean, for I never heard the subject mentioned. I am quite sure, however, that should it be in the power of Frederic to oblige you in any way, he will only be too happy to do it."

"Angel!" ejaculated the grateful Miss Elfreda.

"But now, will you listen to me, aunt, about something very different, and, as I hope you will feel, much more important. My dear aunt Worthington, your long absent sister Penelope, and her son Charles, are in London."

To say that Miss Elfreda changed colour as she listened to these words, would be giving a very weak description of their effect upon her complexion. Her face, poor lady, positively became purple. She opened her eyes, and she opened her mouth also; yet it was some seconds before she articulated the words "God forbid!" which at length, however, burst from her gasping lips.

Judith had predetermined to be very pa-

tient, very gentle, and on no account to lose her temper; but these words went far towards making her forget all these good resolutions. If there had been any power of observation left in Miss Elfreda's glaring eyes, she might have perceived such a flash of indignation in the dark orbs of Judith, as might, perhaps, have quelled her courage a little. But, as it was, she positively saw nothing save the visions presented to her mind's eye, and the only image clearly discernible therein was that of Frederic Dorking leading Lady Katherine Wilmot (who was known to be violently in love with him) to the altar; while his mother stood staring at her luckless self, and cutting her dead, before the eyes of all the people of fashion who had ever spoken to her since her arrival in London! In short, both ladies were very vehemently agitated; but it was the younger one who recovered herself the first.

"Aunt Elfreda!" said she, with much solemnity, "we have been living together in great harmony. Think twice before you say any thing about my aunt Worthington which may force me to quarrel with you!"

"Quarrel with me!" cried the ill-advised lady, with a most injudicious accent of contempt. "You have quarrelled with your other guardian already, Miss Judith, and your quarrelling with me won't enable you to throw off the authority of both."

"I have neither the wish nor intention of throwing off the authority of either," replied Judith, "as long as it is exercised in conformity to the declared will of my mother, from which same will it is alone derived. My aunt Barbara offended me by her insulting rudeness to Mr. Frederic Dorking, and a friend in whom I have all confidence advised me to leave her. But not either to that friend, or to any other, however near and dear to me, shall I apply for counsel as to how I shall comport myself towards the dear relative for whom my mother's dying words bespoke my utmost tenderness and duty. If you oppose my obeying these injunctions, I shall trust to Frederic Dorking's kindness to making up his quarrel with aunt Barbara, and shall return to her immediately."

Judith was much too angry when she made this speech to calculate all the effect it was likely to produce; but had she done so in her very coolest moment, it is impossible she could have hit on any line of argument so likely to convince her aunt Elfreda that she had better be quiet, than the one she had adopted.

The mention of Frederic Dorking, too, as an ally, had great effect; for, during the first distracting communication of the arrival of the ruined artist's widow, the only means that occurred to her of preventing the loss of the coroneted nephew, of whom she was thinking and dreaming both night and day, was to deny all knowledge of the Worthington name and race; and to this means she would most assuredly have had recourse, would Judith have suffered it.

But now a new light broke in upon her. It was not, indeed, without a very dusky cloud surrounding it, but still she began to hope that the black night of hopeless fashionless obscurity was not again to envelope her.

"Do not be so very hasty with me, my darling child!" cried the now admirably judicious Miss Elfreda, drawing forth her pocket-handkerchief and pressing it to her eyes. "Surely you ought to know by this time, my beloved Judith, that your happiness, your gratification in all ways, is the chief object of my life; and if you perceived me shrink from the idea of seeing my poor imprudent sister Penelope, it was only because I feared that her arrival here might be injurious to your prospects."

"Then we are friends again, aunt Elfreda," said the placable Judith, holding out her hand in token of amity. "But as to my prospects," she added, after her hand was released from the almost convulsive grasp of her fond aunt, "as to my prospects, aunt Elfreda, be very sure that if any of the prospects to which I suspect you allude were to be changed by the arrival of my aunt Worthington, I should consider myself as one of the most fortunate people in the world for having escaped a connexion that must have been detestable to me. Besides, you do not suppose, do you, that even if my dear aunt had not arrived, I should have married Frederic Dorking without his being made acquainted with her existence and that of her son! I have only waited to learn the result of the last inquiries I set on foot concerning them at Rome, in order to inform him of all I knew. And now, thank Heaven, instead of doing that which, if they had been still lost to me, would have been very painful, I shall have the extreme happiness of introducing two of the most charming people I have ever seen as among my nearest relations."

"You have already seen them, then, Judith?" said Miss Elfreda, looking half curious and half terrified.

"Yes," replied Judith; "and I trust that many hours will not elapse before you will have seen them also."

"Judith!" ejaculated Miss Elfreda, in an accent of great tenderness, "my affection for you really seems to triumph over every other feeling. Whatever my sister Barbara's faults may be in other matters, neither she nor I ought to be blamed for disapproving of Penelope's elopement. I do not believe that you will find any of your friends who will not tell you, if they speak sincerely, that such a step was deserving of blame."

"I have no doubt of it," returned Judith; "nay, I have no doubt, either, that my aunt Penelope blames it herself. But that is not now the question. My part, in all that is to follow now, is clear enough, for nobody can doubt that it is my duty to obey my mother's last injunctions, and obey them I most certainly shall. Your conduct will, of course, be regulated according to your notions of what is right, as well as my own, and then, however much we may differ in practice, we shall at least agree in principle. Of course, too, I shall not presume to dictate to you in any way; I will only beg, as a matter of convenience, that you will let me know as soon as possible what your intentions are."

There was so much of quiet determination in the manner of the young Judith as she said this, that all idea of opposing her melted away from the soul of Miss Elfreda, like a morning mist before the meridian sun.

"Oh! as to that, my dear," she said, in the most obliging accents possible, "I have no intention of doing anything in the world but what you wish."

On hearing this, Judith thought it was time to be gracious, and, rising from her chair, she took Miss Elfreda by the hand, and kissed her.

Miss Elfreda, of course, returned the caress very cordially, and then it was speedily settled between them that an invitation to dinner on the following day should be immediately written by Miss Elfreda, and inclosed in a note from Judith.

"Thomas shall take it," said the happy girl; "but there is another note he must take also. I must see Frederic Dorking this morning; you know, aunt, I am to dine with his mother, and go with them afterwards to the Opera. But Grisi will be no Grisi for me, if I have the burden of a secret on my heart. I *must* see Frederic this morning."

"Certainly, my dear! certainly. Nothing can be more natural than that you should wish to do so,—such a very charming young man as he is! But I wish the interview was well over, Judith, too! What will he say about his mother, I wonder?" said Miss Elfreda, with something very like a shudder.

"If Frederic be the man I take him for," replied Judith, "he will manage it all for us. Fear nothing, aunt Elfreda. We are told, you know, that perfect love casteth out fear; and my love for Frederic Dorking is much too near perfection to admit any fear upon this subject."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE note addressed by Judith to her lover fortunately met him at the door of his father's house, and immediately caused him to turn his steps to Green Street, instead of calling upon a friend in the Albany, as he had purposed to do.

"Oh, William of Deloraine! good at need!"

exclaimed Judith, joyfully clapping her pretty hands as she saw him enter the drawing-room, where her very considerate and a good deal frightened aunt had taken care she should be alone.

"A delicious welcome!" cried the young man, approaching her; and then, after waiting till the servant had closed the door, dropping gracefully enough upon one knee, and kissing those fair hands, "But wherefore, my fairest, do you bestow it on me at this particular moment?" he added, placing himself on the sofa beside her.

"Because I most particularly want your faithful services," said Judith.

"How delighted I am to hear it!" he replied. "Tell me, my Judith! what can I do to serve and please you?"

"Oh, very much! More, much more, than any one else in the world could do for me! Tell me, dear Frederic, do you remember all or anything that you have ever heard me say about my aunt Worthington?"

"To be sure I do, my dearest Judith!" he replied; "how is it possible I should forget it? You had lost her address, sweetest, and I was miserable because I knew of no possible means by which I could find it for you."

"Now, then, wish me joy, dear friend!" said Judith, "for I have not only found her address, but I have found her too."

"Is it possible? How delighted I am! Is she in England, then?" said Frederic.

"Not only in England, but in London, Frederic," said she. "But it was not only to tell you this that I sent for you, though I well knew that your kind heart would feel pleasure at what had so greatly delighted mine. No, it was not this. I could have kept my news, welcome as it is, till dinner time. But I am beset with difficulties, my dear Frederic, and I know nobody but yourself who can help me out of them."

"This is a trap, Judith," said the young man, laughing. "You want to make me confess that I am delighted to hear of your difficulties, because I may have the exceeding pleasure of getting you out of them. But say on, my beautiful Judith! I will enjoy the pleasure, and make no boast of it."

"But it may be, that my difficulties may make difficulties for you also, and this is the most disagreeable part of the business. But it cannot be helped, and so now I will tell you everything."

And she really did tell him everything, fairly, plainly, clearly, and honestly; nor had she the least reason to repent her own sincerity, or to change the opinion she had formed of her lover's character.

"I never heard a more interesting story in my life," he exclaimed. "From the first page to the last, it is a most beautiful romance. But, Judith, how oddly the Jenkyns' family seem to have been divided into two pairs. Your charming mother and this delightful aunt Worthington might have been twins, and so, *entre nous*, might the spinster appendages of the race; for though their ways of boring one are different, the result, as far as liking goes, is very much the same."

Judith laughed, for she could not help it, but she replied, with all the gravity she could command, "No quizzing of my near relations, if you please, Mr. Frederic. We are a very respectable race, and respected we must be accordingly. But, dearest Frederic, though you have heard the history of my charming aunt Worthington, and though I feel the most delightful certainty that you will find her charming, and her queer but very clever son also, you have not yet got me out of my difficulties."

"Assuredly I have not, my Judith, for as yet I have heard of none."

"True, O Frederic! And now, then, listen. This history of the picture-gallery has a sequel, which if you have only a little bit of worldly wisdom, my most dear *fiancé*,

you may surely guess. My aunt Worthington and her son Charles are arrived in England in a state of the most perfect destitution. The collection of pictures has been seized for debt; but a comparatively small sum would, as my aunt tells me, suffice to release them. The diamonds that I have brought home to her, as a legacy from my mother, will, I imagine, much more than cover that; and if we can manage to get this transaction settled, there will be the value of the pictures left for the support of my aunt and her son. What this may amount to, it is quite impossible for us even to guess; but even this question, important as it is, is of less immediate consequence than their present means of existence."

"How happy am I, my beloved Judith," cried Frederic, interrupting her, "that my banker's book is in a condition to spare you every atom of anxiety on that account. Of course I have not my cheque book in my pocket; but you have only to name the amount that you wish me to draw, and it shall be sent to you within half an hour."

The eyes of Judith were fixed upon him as he said this, but before he had finished they were dim with tears. "My dear, dear Frederic," she exclaimed, with deep emotion, "how rightly did I judge you! But, alas! dear friend, you will find that all that *your own* dear warm generous heart can do to get me out of my troubles will not suffice. It is your *influence*, Frederic, that I want, and not your money. I have plenty of that, you know. No, no, no, it is not money, Frederic, it is influence. It is the power, if you possess it, of inoculating others with your own generous feelings. It is almost unseemly, and quite unnatural, I think, for a youth and maiden, like you and I, to sit in discussion upon hundreds per annum for bed, board, and other necessities; and yet it is to this that my difficulties have reduced me. I really do hate to talk about it, but I must. So listen to me again, Frederic,—do, dearest!"

"What would I not listen to, so conjured?" cried the enamoured young man, fervently.

"Nay, that won't do, either," said the hard-to-please Judith. "You must not listen to me, and look at me, and answer me in that manner. It won't do at all. You must try to be more like a lawyer, or something of that kind."

"Well, then, most bewitching! Go on. I am all over law."

Judith shook her head reprovably, but, nevertheless, she went steadily on through all she had to say, and made him understand that what she wanted of him, in the first place, was to make her aunt Elfreda comprehend that he knew every thing about the Worthingtons, their poverty, and the artistic profession of Charles included; and that it was his opinion that Judith ought, from the income allowed her by the Chancellor, to take care, while their affairs remained in their present perplexed condition, to supply them with the means of living comfortably. And that the putting down her carriage, and even parting with her footman and maid, would not be more than so near a relationship required of her, if it were found to be necessary. "And in the second place," continued Judith, "I want you to state as much of the case as may be absolutely necessary, in your most graceful manner, to your mother; and make her understand that, if she would patronise Charles Worthington, she would probably have the *éclat* of introducing to the English public the most talented artist of the age."

Frederic laughed at her flourish, and declared she was an admirable pupil of aunt Elfreda, who did all her puffing exactly in that style.

"But seriously, Judith," he added, "tell me something positive about this young cousin. Does he take portraits?"

"I have not the least doubt of it," she replied; "for really, without either jesting or puffing, I have never seen any thing so clever as his drawings."

"Drawings! His portraits would not be in oils, then?" said he.

"I cannot answer that question," replied Judith, "but I should rather think not."

"That is charming," returned Frederic. "Clever drawings are admired, I am told, by everybody, and if they are in the portrait line, so much the better; for at least nine people out of every ten have their portraits taken, so we shall find patrons by thousands. But I know my mother hates oil pictures. She says they smell so horribly. But drawings! Oh! I'll undertake to patronise drawings to any extent. Is there any thing else, my lovely angel, in which I can serve or please you?"

"Dearest Frederic, no!" replied Judith, giving him her hand affectionately. "You cannot think how very delightful it is, Frederic, after having formed a superlatively

high opinion of some one, to find upon trial that they are something more admirable still than even your fancy had painted ! You have made me very, very happy !”

But, despite her happiness, the eyes of Judith were swimming in tears.

Frederic Dorking, however, did not appear to misunderstand them, for, as once again he kissed her hand, and bade her “ adieu, till dinner,” he looked himself the very perfection of happiness.

Judith had been fully aware, before the interview began, that it must be a very important one.

Had her lover displayed any thing that she could have felt to be *littleness of heart*, she was conscious that the effect must in every way have been fatal to her happiness. Had he appeared alarmed either at the idea that she might injure her own fortune by assisting her poor relations, or had he testified any thing like regret or mortification at learning that a young man with whom he was about to unite himself so nearly was an artist looking forward to his own exertions for support, had either of these two possibilities occurred, Judith felt both that her love would have been shaken, or, at any rate, all sweetness taken from it, and that the prospects before her had lost all their brightness.

But how delightfully different were all her feelings now ! One of the most marked traits in the character of Frederic Dorking was the absolute incapacity for feigning, which evidently belonged to it ; and it was her intimate knowledge of this which rendered the scene which had just passed between them so vitally important in her eyes. She was quite aware that he very passionately loved her, and that it would have been difficult, perhaps, for any family anecdotes which she could have communicated to have suddenly so chilled his love as to have led to any change of purpose towards her. But Judith had found time to tell herself, before this important interview took place, that, flattering as this might be, it would not satisfy her. Had he displayed athwart this tender constancy either of the feelings above alluded to, she felt, and she trembled as she felt it, that in that case it was her constancy that would fail.

But now, instead of this, she was conscious that she loved him better, oh ! far more devotedly, than she had ever done before.

Never, perhaps, had Judith looked so radiantly beautiful as she did that night at the Opera.

She was still at the age when every day seems to increase beauty. We talk of the unmarked progress of time ; but if his progress be unmarked, it is because we look not keenly at what is going on, and not because he relaxes in his very effective work.

When the process of improvement ends, that of deterioration as surely begins, as does the fading of light in the western sky when the sun is taking his nightly leave of us. There may, indeed, be moments when, if his exit be performed with all the gorgeous state with which he sometimes clothes his departure, the brightness may seemingly become greater instead of less, yet, nevertheless, the light is diminishing. And so it is with woman’s loveliness.

There would be something very sad in this, were it not that the same keenness of observation that shows this, shows also it is only over the mortal portion of us that the venerable tyrant can display his destructive power, and a very comfortable little proof it is, too, that the *end all* is not here.

All this, however, is digression. The plain fact is, that Judith Maitland had really and truly never looked so very radiantly lovely as she did that night at the Opera, nor had her mother-in-law elect ever felt so thoroughly proud of her ; nor had Frederic himself, perhaps, ever before been so deeply and completely convinced that his affianced wife was the most enchanting being upon earth than during those bright hours.

As to Judith’s feelings, they, too, seemed to partake the *issimo* tone, as Horace Walpole would have called it, which pervaded the sensations of those around her, for her heart assured her that Frederic was the most generous, the most amiable of men ; her eyes acknowledged that nothing could exceed the brilliance of the scene before them, and her ears, that nothing could transcend the perfection of the music. In a word, she felt perfectly happy.

And yet, with all this perfection of contentment, she was still conscious that she had a great deal to do—a great deal of positive business to get through, during the next few days ; but she did not feel that this was any reason why she should be deprived of the happiness of seeing Frederic in the interval. Besides, she positively longed to introduce her handsome clever-looking cousin to him, and therefore she ventured to whisper, as they stood together in the squeeze-room, “ I shall not be able to see you to-morrow

morning for a single moment, for I must go early to my aunt Worthington's, and probably be with her almost all day; but they are coming to dine with us, and if you can steal time from mamma to come to Green Street for half an hour, I could introduce you to them."

Is there any form by which a promise can be made more satisfactory than that adopted by Frederic Dorking when he gave his assent to this proposition? I think not, and yet it consisted only of a look.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THERE was no longer any mystery now as to where Judith was going, when the carriage drove to the door after breakfast; and Miss Elfreda, having been assured that Frederic Dorking had declared it to be his intention to patronise Charles as an artist till he made him completely the fashion, felt her heart warm towards her young nephew in the most remarkable manner; nay, upon the strength of this, she scrupled not to send her love to her sister, together with the expression of her hope (rather a bold one considering all that had passed) that they should meet at dinner as good friends as ever.

For Judith's sake, in truth, Mrs. Worthington was perfectly ready to forgive and forget every thing, the remembrance of which might have the effect of keeping them asunder, and as for Charles, though perfectly ready to do battle with any one who had offended his mother, he knew so absolutely nothing of all the antecedent circumstances, as to be perfectly ready to take this early invitation as a proof that he was going to visit an affectionate relative.

When Judith entered the comfortless little sitting-room, wherein all the affections of her heart seemed centred—for now the idea of Frederic was delightfully mixed with all it contained—she seated herself, as before, very closely beside her aunt upon the sofa, and, having given a passing shake of the hand to Charles when he opened the door to her knock, began to utter something about Frederic Dorking to her in a whisper.

"Do not mutter in that way, you cruel cousin," he exclaimed. "It will be a great deal better to send me away again, as you did yesterday."

Judith felt that the reproof was merited. She blushed a very celestial rosy blush, and then, after the meditation of half a moment, she said, "No! cousin Charles, I will not

send you away; indeed you ought not to be sent away, for I am going to talk particularly about you—only— Pray, aunt Penelope, did you tell him any thing about what I said to you yesterday?"

"She told me that you were going to be married, cousin Judith. Is that what you mean?" said the young man, with a slight augmentation of colour.

"Yes. That is what I meant; because if you did not know that you could not understand what I was going to tell my aunt now."

"I told him of it, my dear, because you did not enjoin secrecy, and because the information was interesting," said Mrs. Worthington.

"It is all right, aunt! I wanted him to know it; and to-night, after dinner I mean, I shall hope to have the pleasure of introducing Frederic Dorking to you both. He is already deeply interested in the success of Charles as an artist. And his mother, I believe, has great influence."

"Is Mr. Frederic Dorking fond of art?" demanded Charles, with a look and tone of eager interest.

"I don't know," replied Judith, blushing, yet without the least knowing why.

Charles, however, seemed to think that he did, and he looked the other way, as kind-tempered people always do when they see, or fancy they see, symptoms of confusion on a fellow-creature's face.

In fact, he very decidedly thought that Judith had cause to blush, if she did not know whether the man she had promised to marry loved drawing or not.

However, there was a great deal too much to be done and settled among them to permit any leisure for such idle speculations, and in a very few minutes Mrs. Worthington, finding the wishes and the wilfulness of Judith united to be a power which she had no strength to resist, resigned herself to her commands without farther struggle, and the trio mounted Judith's carriage without much farther loss of time, and were speedily conveyed to Mortimer Street, where the inquiring eyes of Judith had descried the announcement of apartments, containing a 'well-lighted painting-room.'

Had the accommodation they found there been expressly provided for them, it could not have been more exactly all they could want or wish for.

All the arrangements necessary to their

entering upon it were brought to a conclusion with wonderful celerity, by means of a little of Judith's "wilfulness;" for Charles having gently taken his mother by the shoulders, and placed her in an arm chair on a very convenient estrade, for the purpose of ascertaining the effect of a sky-light, very artistically arranged for the use of a painter, Judith gave an expressive touch and look to the respectable-looking female who attended them, and who appeared to be the mistress of the premises, and, taking her into an outward room, brought the whole transaction to a conclusion with very little loss of time, yet not without a touch of common sense either; for though Judith certainly made no difficulties about the rent asked, which, all things considered, was not unreasonable, she would not agree to take the rooms for more than a month certain.

The whole thing, however, occupied wonderfully little time, and Judith and the landlady re-entered the painting-room together, just in time to see Charles hand his mother from the elevated station on which he had placed her, paying her a compliment upon the graceful attitude in which she had sat to him.

"I have told Mrs. Morris," said Judith, who had learnt her name by the simple process of asking for it, "I have told Mrs. Morris that you will not come in till after breakfast to-morrow, which will give her ample time, she says, to get all the rooms in nice order for you. We have only agreed for a month, certain, aunt," she added, with much business-like composure, "but I have told her that if you and my cousin find everything comfortable, it is probable that you will stay much longer."

Mrs. Worthington had too much tact to demonstrate any thing like surprise; and as to Charles, whose brain was in a perfect fever of delight at the idea of making a portrait of his mother seated on an estrade beneath a skylight, felt no doubt whatever that the delightful arrangement had been made between his mother and Judith, without his having observed it.

This important business concluded, Judith declared herself under the necessity of returning home, to keep an engagement, as soon as she had set them down in Newman Street; and during the short drive thither, Mrs. Worthington was made so thoroughly to understand the misery which it would be to her niece, if she raised any difficulties in

submitting to her arrangements for their accommodation, that she positively, from mere love for her, abstained from it, comforting herself with the persuasion, by no means a wild or unreasonable one, that when the collection of pictures was set free, such a settlement of accounts might take place between them as would prevent the mere money part of the obligations she was bestowing on them from remaining unsettled.

As to the debt of affection, the incurring it was the only real pleasure that had visited the head of the poor widow since she had lost her husband; and, in truth, there was much in the loving ways of the wilful Judith, and in the sensitive watchfulness with which she seemed to weigh and care for every feeling of this hardly-treated relative, that might have healed and soothed any heart, not absolutely callous and insensible to kindness.

Judith had not exaggerated the importance of her affairs, when she said that she had too much to do at home, to permit her accompanying them up stairs when they returned to Newman Street; for, in the first place, she found her maid waiting for her, with a decent middle-aged female, who had been strongly recommended as a person capable of being an efficient servant for Mrs. Worthington; this affair, too, was very speedily arranged, and the woman instructed to be in Mortimer Street by ten o'clock on the following morning. When this was settled, Judith found time to sit down to luncheon with her aunt Elfreda, and during this repast she contrived to make her completely understand, that, in consequence of her mother's dying injunctions on the subject, she considered that the comfort and welfare of her aunt Worthington ought to be the first object of her life.

Miss Elfreda was a good deal startled by the strength and fervour with which she expressed herself, but after the pause of a moment, she replied, "It is very pretty and sweet of you, my dear, to show such reverence to your poor dear mamma's memory; but of course you don't mean, Judith, that when you change your condition, that is, I mean, when you become a married woman, you don't intend *then* that your aunt Worthington shall be the first object of your life?"

"I intend to keep my mother's solemn injunction ever in mind," replied Judith, gravely; "though I trust I shall, at the same time, be able to fulfil the other duties which I may have taken upon myself."

"There is nothing to say, I am sure, against such excellent intentions, my dear love," said Miss Elfreda; "but yet, my sweet Judith, I cannot help fearing that it is possible Mr. Frederic may think that he and his own charming and highly distinguished mother ought to be first and foremost in your good graces."

"I have taken care, aunt Elfreda, that there shall be no misunderstanding between us on this subject," replied her niece. "He is already prepared to treat my aunt Worthington, and my cousin Charles also, exactly in the way that I wish; and I think you will find, if you will converse with him on the subject, that he is very decidedly of opinion that we ought to give up the carriage if we find we cannot assist my aunt Worthington effectually without doing so."

A thunderbolt falling at her feet could scarcely have caused poor Miss Elfreda to start more vehemently than did these last words of Judith.

"Give up the carriage, my dearest angel!" she exclaimed. "You do not, you cannot, think of it! Oh! Judith, Judith!" she continued, with tears in her eyes, "you are very, very young and you know not, you cannot know, the great, the tremendous, I might say the awful difference which our putting down the carriage would make in the eyes of every acquaintance we have in the world! Do any thing but THAT, my darling, darling girl, and you shall see that I will go hand in hand with you in every effort that you can make for Penelope and her son; for I would do any thing else to please you. But if you do not wish to break my heart at once, you will not do THAT!"

Judith took a minute or two to reflect before she answered her. She felt very forcibly that if Miss Elfreda could really be brought to go hand in hand with her in all she wished to do for her aunt Worthington, the object upon which she had set her heart would be much more effectually obtained than if she found opposition from her at every step; and she was not many seconds in coming to the very wise determination of obtaining her object *smoothly*, if possible.

"My dear aunt," she said, "I cannot, as far as I am personally concerned, attach the same importance to the carriage as you do; but believe me, aunt Elfreda, while endeavouring to perform the duty enjoined by my dying mother to my poor suffering aunt Penelope, it will be my very earnest wish to do

so in the way least inconvenient to you. We all know that, under the present circumstances, the first thing needful to aunt Worthington is money. They have still, I believe, a very considerable property in Rome, but unfortunately this is at present quite unavailable; and if we do not, among us, find the means of existence for them, they have really no resource but appealing to public charity. Now their doing this, aunt Elfreda, would appear to me as likely to be much more injurious to *us all*, than putting down the carriage and dismissing my two in-door servants. Mrs. Dorking, for instance, and even my dear generous Frederic too, might, I think, be a great deal startled, and a great deal shocked, at learning that my aunt was in a workhouse."

This was rather a long speech, but not a word of it was lost on Miss Elfreda; and the effect was every thing that Judith could desire. That both the maiden aunts were *interested* in their *eager* wish to appropriate the personal guardianship of the wealthy ward, is very certain, but the two old ladies wore their avarice with a difference. Miss Barbara had a sort of mixed notion of saving up money, and of purchasing the reverend hand of the most admired of prebends, by what she should receive from "the Lord High Chancellor of England" on behalf of Judith; whereas the plans of Miss Elfreda were of a nature much less sublime, though by no means less dear to her heart.

The first object of *her* heart was to establish herself in a London circle of acquaintance, on a footing a little higher than she had any right to claim; which, it may be observed, in passing, pretty precisely describes the object of all those who seek society from any other object than individual personal affection.

Now, in order to obtain this darling object, it was not desirable, as Miss Elfreda Jenkyns perfectly well knew, that she should take it into her head to save money, but only that she should, somehow or other, be able to spend it. It was with this view, and with this only, that she rejoiced with so much endearing and affectionate enthusiasm at the arrival of Judith under her protection; and the *éclat* of keeping a carriage was so much dearer to her than any convenience she might derive from the use of it, that she would willingly have made a compact with Fate, never to have enjoyed again till her dying day the luxury of using a private carriage, provided

only that she might, throughout the whole of her mortal career, enjoy the credit of possessing one.

Whatever pains she might have taken at a more tranquil moment to conceal from her niece the intensity of this feeling, she took none now; and Judith was not slow in perceiving whereabouts the spring was to be found by which her actions might be regulated.

She took no unfair advantage of this, however, only taking care to make it understood, that if the carriage was not given up, it was to be on condition that they should between them find wherewithal to supply the assistance which at this moment it was so absolutely necessary for Mrs. Worthington to receive. More than one cause, as the poet truly says, the same effect may give; and never was this made more evident than in the seeming sympathy with which henceforward Miss Elfreda and her niece acted in all that concerned the Worthingtons; and yet the North and South are not wider asunder than the motives by which they were actuated.

CHAPTER L.

BUT to return. The meeting between the long-parted sisters was performed with great propriety on both sides; and Judith looked the other way while they embraced, and by that means avoided seeing the sort of involuntary stiffness on both sides with which the operation was performed.

As to the reception of Charles, there was much more of sincerity in it; for he certainly was, not only one of the handsomest, but one of the most prepossessing young fellows that ever was looked upon, and Miss Elfreda, like every one else, felt the effect of it. There was, therefore, positively a genuine feeling of liking and cordiality in her manner of shaking hands with him; and as this feeling, by some mysterious means or other, is generally made known to the individual who inspires, as well as to the one by whom it is experienced, the acquaintance between the aunt and nephew was immediately established on a much more agreeable footing than Judith had dared to hope for.

The dinner really passed very pleasantly; and then came the meeting between Judith's affianced husband and the relatives she most fondly cherished.

Her heart beat, poor girl, as she heard Frederic's well-known step on the stair, and she felt that the interview was an important

one to her future happiness. It was not so much concerning her aunt Worthington, as concerning Charles, that she felt anxious. Her aunt, who was still a very handsome woman, had precisely that sort of personal appearance, concerning the effect of which nobody could feel anxious. She was tall and graceful in person, and so really distinguished by her general appearance, as to render the extreme simplicity of her deep mourning dress rather picturesque than homely. Her manner, also, could not, to use an American phrase, be "faulted," so that on her account Judith had no anxiety.

But with respect to Charles, the case was different. His features, though quite as handsome, did not express one half of the high-bred amiable amenity which was so strikingly perceptible in the countenance of Frederic. The first glance of his eye had more, perhaps, of a challenge than a salute in it; and even in his smile, though it displayed the most perfect set of teeth imaginable, there was, at the same first glance, more of sauciness than civility.

All this, however, was only at the first glance, for a more frank, a more kind, a more affectionate heart, never beat in human bosom than that possessed by Charles Worthington. But, during all the pecuniary embarrassments which had immediately preceded and followed his father's death, he had always felt himself, poor boy, on the defensive with his fellow-creatures; and as love for his mother, and for his art, divided his soul between them, and as he ever stood ready to "buckler them" both against "a million," he had acquired more of firmness than of suavity in his intercourse with mankind.

Judith did not quite know all this, but she guessed a good deal of it, and therefore it was that she felt so peculiarly anxious that the first impression each of the young men received of the other should be favourable.

And in a great degree it was so. Frederic's first expression, when speaking of young Worthington, was, "An exceedingly fine young man." And Charles's, in answer to Judith's question, of how he liked his future cousin, was, "Oh! very much indeed! He is monstrous handsome, and would make an admirable study for a Spanish grandee, or something of that kind—only he wants—"

"Wants what?" said Judith, for he had stopped short in the midst of his speech.

"Why, I think, for a picture, he wants more depth of colour about the eyes."

Nothing could be more amiable than the manner in which the young patrician questioned the young artist about his love of art, and offered his services in obtaining admission for him to any private collections he might wish to visit.

"Could we not all go together picture-hunting?" said Judith, who had never yet enlisted her adorer in any expedition of the kind, from suspecting, she scarcely knew why, that it would not interest him.

"Oh, charming!" replied Frederic, eagerly. "There is nothing I should like so well! Charles Worthington shall tell me what I ought to admire; for hitherto, I protest to you, I have been too modest to form an opinion on the subject."

Charles looked at him with a bright keen glance, which seemed sent to discover whether he spake in jest or earnest; and then from the face of Frederic the eyes of Charles turned to that of Judith, but it was with a look not very easy to be interpreted, for it was graver than the occasion seemed to call for.

Judith coloured, and felt half angry with her cousin, which was extremely unreasonable, for he had neither smiled nor frowned, nor, in fact, in any way given the least indication of any feeling that could justify it.

From painting the conversation turned on music.

"Ah! Charles Worthington," exclaimed Dorking, "you may have left the native land of pictures, as I have heard my fair Judith call Italy,—you may have left the native land of pictures behind you, but you are come to the native land of music, I promise you! You must hear your cousin Judith sing, Mr. Worthington."

"Does my cousin Judith sing?" demanded Charles, eagerly. "I am very glad to hear it."

And, so saying, he straightway approached the piano-forte, opened it, and put the music-stool in its proper place.

"Now, then, Mr. Dorking!" said he, "pray lead the young lady to her place. She is not apt to be rebellious, is she?"

"Oh, no!" cried Dorking, with enthusiasm. "Her temper is as sweet as her voice. You will oblige your cousin, will you not, *mon amie*?"

"I will oblige you both, if my singing can do it," returned Judith; and immediately taking the place prepared for her, she ran her fingers over the keys in a slight prelude,

and then sang Mozart's beautiful air, "Batti, batti, bel Mazetto," with a perfection of grace and finish rarely found in any singing, and very rarely indeed in the singing of an amateur.

Frederic Dorking was profuse and enthusiastic in his praise, but Charles Worthington said not a word.

He was standing at no great distance from her, nevertheless, and she looked up at him, for his silence had something almost uncivil in it. If her look was meant as a reproof, however, it failed of its effect, for he did not see it, his eyes being covered by his hand. But his head was bent down upon his chest, and his whole attitude was rather that of a man rapt and entranced, than either indifferent or disappointed.

"Well, Mr. Worthington! Is the voice too English a voice to please you?" said Frederic, rather reproachfully.

Charles raised his head, dropped his hand, shook his dark curls, and smiled. He still said not a word, however, but giving Judith, who by this time had quitted her place at the piano, one short glance, he placed himself on the seat she had left, and sang the spirited drinking song from the same opera, with an *est*ro that effectually contradicted the idea of his having been in some sort overcome by the unexpected *quality* of the voice to which he had been listening, if indeed any such idea might have been suggested by his demeanour.

"You did not tell me, aunt Penelope, that my cousin was a musician," said Judith. "His voice is magnificent, and his accompaniment quite first rate."

"Almost all artists are more or less musicians, I believe," replied Mrs. Worthington, "His father's voice was quite as fine; but Charles has certainly profited by his Italian education."

"Dear me! It is quite fine singing, isn't it, Mr. Dorking?" said Miss Elfreda.

"Yes, indeed!" replied Frederic, very cordially; "it seems quite so to me, I assure you. How charmed Mrs. Chilbert would be, would she not, Judith?"

"Yes," said Judith, "she would be pleased both with the voice and the manner."

"I wonder that I never heard of you at Rome. Were you a great deal in society, my dear fellow?" said Frederic.

"I? Oh, no. Society, as you call it, was not at all in our line, was it, mamma?" said Charles.

Mrs. Worthington shook her head, but only quietly answered "No."

"Judith! Is that all we are to have?" said Charles, rising from the instrument. "I want a morsel of Rossini."

"And I want a Neapolitan ballad," said Judith. "Sit down again, Mr. Charles, if you please."

Charles immediately obeyed her, and with considerable humour, and with all the charm of a most magnificent voice, sang several of those delicious popular airs which enchant almost equally from their melody and their quaintness.

Mrs. Worthington looked amused and pleased. Her sister Elfreda looked puzzled. She discovered by the face of Judith that there was something comical in what had been sung, yet she perceived also, from an occasional word and an occasional look, that she admired his singing still more than she laughed at it, but it seemed exceedingly odd to Miss Elfreda that she should do both. She then looked rather anxiously at Mr. Dorking to see in which way he took it, and, to her inexpressible discomfiture, she saw him yawn!

It would be no easy matter to do justice to the variety of emotions which seized upon her as she beheld this painful phenomenon. She knew it to be a symptom, and, to the best of her knowledge and belief, an infallible one, that he was bored. Now that any young gentleman of fashion should be bored at a select little party at her house, or in "her rooms," as she more correctly expressed herself, was of itself a circumstance calculated to wound her to the quick. But that the gentleman of fashion should be Frederic Dorking, was too painful to endure without wincing; and accordingly she did wince, which wincing was demonstrated by her pulling Judith by the sleeve, and winking vehemently with one eye, while the other was expressively directed towards Mr. Dorking.

But long ere Judith had begun in the remotest degree to comprehend the meaning of the grimace, another vehement feeling supervened. "What will happen next," thought the observant but unfortunate maiden aunt; "what will happen next, if Judith thinks I mean to be rude to Charles Worthington? She will be back at Westhampton, carriage and all, before I know where I am."

And then, instead of winking, she smiled, and nodded her head and smiled again, and went on thus for several minutes, looking

at every individual of the company by turns, and fervently hoping that they would each and every of them interpret her smiles and her nods in the manner most agreeable to themselves.

And did Judith, too, see the yawn? Yes, she did, but the effect of it was not to lower Frederic in her estimation, but herself.

Long, long ago, in the very earliest days of their acquaintance, both she and her friend Mrs. Chilbert had made the discovery (at which it was by no means difficult to arrive, for Frederic Dorking had not a grain of affectation in him), that he had no love of music in him. And they had talked the matter over very philosophically, bringing themselves finally to the conclusion, that no folly could be greater than that which led people to expect, or to wish, that all the world should be made exactly upon one model. And having laid this conclusion to their hearts, they never—at least as far as Judith was concerned—they decidedly never loved Frederic Dorking the *less*, for not being, as she laughingly said, like Mr. Saunders, the singing minor canon, *more*.

They only took care, both of them, not to mix his visits and those of the vocal churchman together; and, this rule being strictly attended to, no ill effects of any kind arose from this variety (Judith would not permit it to be called a deficiency) in Frederic's organization.

It was natural enough, therefore, that she should blame herself now; and she did so severely, reproaching herself particularly for her own inferiority in courtesy and kindness to her lover, who had so amiably alluded to her singing for the purpose of displaying her little talent to her relations, without thinking of himself, and his own likes and dislikes, for a moment.

All she could do now, however, she did. She closed the instrument, and, establishing herself at a table in another part of the room, invited her aunt Worthington to come and examine a new "Book of Beauty," of which she had just made a present to the round-table of her aunt Elfreda.

And as she sat herself down to do the honours of it, drawing a chair close to her own for "aunt Penelope," she scrupled not to indicate to Frederic, by a glance of her eye, that she would permit him to occupy a chair on the other side of her.

This certainly was the best atonement she could have devised for having bored him with

music; for, in the first place, the juxtaposition she had chosen for him was one for which he always appeared to feel a particular partiality; and in the second, a new book of aristocratic beauty was always sure of being interesting to an aristocratic young man. Not that it must be presumed that Miss Elfreda's round table had the honour of being the first to present this charming volume to the eyes of Frederic; on the contrary, he had himself taken care to place it on that of his mother a very few hours after it had seen the light, observing to her, as he laid it before her, that he should take care to have Judith in the next, but he had the honour and happiness of knowing all the fair originals whose portraits, or *soi-disant* portraits, figured there; and when this is the case, the gorgeous volume cannot fail of being interesting.

Miss Elfreda, meantime, had placed herself in readiness to do the honours of her elegantly late tea-table, and Charles was consequently, in some sort, thrown out, and left to his own devices. He, therefore, very naturally took the liberty of placing himself behind his cousin Judith, in such a manner as to enable him to see to perfect advantage, and, in fact, better than any one of the party except Judith herself, the succession of lovely faces which were displayed for the amusement and edification of his mother; Mr. Dorking, meanwhile, running on with a very animated and amusing current commentary on each.

But Charles Worthington was one of those restless spirits who never seem at ease when they are idle, and, having looked at one or two of the portraits, he begged Mr. Dorking to turn to the first page and begin again.

Nothing loath, the young man obeyed the request, and began again, never weary of expatiating on the likeness, or the want of likeness, which each page gave room for.

Charles Worthington, meanwhile, true to his nature, both in propensity to occupation and to art, drew forth from his pocket a small square drawing-book, properly provided with pencils, and set about copying, after his fashion, and with his characteristic rapidity, the fair heads that were thus slowly passed in review before him.

It may probably have struck other people, before it struck Charles Worthington, that notwithstanding the delicate engraving, and notwithstanding the rare beauty of most of the noble and gentle heads which enrich the "Book of Beauty," it may have struck many that there may be found therein some few pe-

culiarities of style, and of drawing; and these were likely enough to attract the peculiarly critical attention of a professional artist, born and bred at Rome.

Be this as it may, however, it is certain that some such peculiarities struck him; and with a vigour and rapidity of touch, that nothing perhaps but the union of decided natural talent with a thoroughly artistic education can give, the mischievous boy contrived to seize the features and air, one after another, of the pretty, smiling, languishing, sentimental beauties, and turn each portrait so completely "the seamy side out," that without leaving the possibility of mistaking the resemblance between the beautiful hot-pressed and his abominable copy of it, he produced something at which it was difficult not to laugh.

Having treated three or four of the loveliest celebrities in this unwarrantable manner, he gently laid his little book, open at the first of them, before his cousin Judith.

Of course she took the liberty of laughing, and laughed heartily for a moment; but then she turned round and scolded him.

"There is nothing, you know, that may not be caricatured, Charles," said she; "and if the very handsomest of English women are not beautiful enough to satisfy your fastidious Italian taste, I think we must send you back again as fast as possible."

"It is not the English women that I have caricatured; it is only the style in which their (really) exquisite loveliness is here portrayed," he gravely replied.

"These portraits, I assure you, are after some of our very first painters," said Frederic Dorking.

"That is very likely," replied Charles; "*that* story is extant, and written in very choice Italian, I promise you. But that will not make me like the style at all better. Judith, you know there was once a man called Raffael, who never did think it necessary to put his women into any postures, actions, forms, or attitudes which were positively unnatural. But then, to be sure, it must be confessed that his pictures were painted before that great law was promulgated, by which it is evident these artists here," pointing to the "Book of Beauty," "have regulated themselves, perhaps, upon compulsion."

"What are you talking about, foolish boy? What law do you mean?" inquired Judith.

"It was indited by no vulgar pen, and I know it must be familiar to you. Indeed, I think it ought to be the motto of all modern picture-galleries. It runs thus, Judith,—

'NATURE MUST GIVE WAY TO ART.'

Judith laughed again, for she could not help it; but again she was angry with him, too. She was exceedingly anxious that he should appear to the greatest possible advantage before Frederic Dorking, and she feared that he might fancy something carping and over-critical in the opinions he had given. Frederic, however, did not appear to think so, for nothing could be more cordially kind and good-natured than the manner in which he shook hands with him at parting, telling him that he hoped they should meet often, and that if there was anything in which his services could be useful, they should be perfectly at his service.

"He is very handsome," said Charles, after Dorking had left the room. "Has he ever had his picture taken, Judith?"

"Not since he was quite a child, I think," she replied.

"I should like to take it—I should like to have some portraits to do, cousin Judith," said the young man, with a more anxious look than she had yet seen him wear. "Now that you, you dear pretty creature, and aunt Elfreda too, have received us so kindly, my pride is satisfied; and I am quite ready, if my dear mother will let me have my way, to put aside the gentleman for ever, and come forth the artist, and nothing but the artist. But in this, I believe, as in everything else, *c'est le premier pas qui coûte*. I have already done one or two portraits that were pronounced passable at Rome, and your turning to look for my name in the catalogue cheers me. There must have been something in that drawing."

"I think there was a great deal in it, Charles; and when the exhibition is over, I mean to buy it," said Judith.

"I would rather give it to you," said poor Charles, "if you will let me."

"I dare say you would, cousin—I can understand that perfectly," she replied; "but that is not the way to do business. When you have made ten thousand pounds clear, either by your own works or by the sale of the pictures you have got at Rome, I will give you permission to make me a present of the very prettiest drawing you can produce."

"So be it!" he replied; "and I should like to go to work upon it to-morrow morning. But tell me, how am I to get my first portrait?"

"Will you take mine, cousin Charles?" said Judith.

He coloured, looked at her earnestly for a moment, and then said, "I would rather take a portrait of aunt Elfreda first."

"What say you to that, dear aunt?" said Judith, by no means displeased at the proposal, which she thought very likely to be graciously listened to by her aunt.

Nor was she mistaken. Miss Elfreda blushed and smiled, and, though hoping in her heart that it would not be *very* dear, she determined instantly not to let any such consideration stop her; and, therefore, in the most gracious manner, proclaimed her perfect readiness to sit to him, whenever he would give her notice that he was coming for that purpose.

"It is not I, it is you that must come, good aunt," replied the young man, eagerly. "You are not aware, perhaps, that I have got one of the best lights and most commodious painting-rooms in London."

"Have you really, my dear?" exclaimed the well-pleased lady, who began to think that matters were not quite in so deplorable a state as she had fancied. "Yes, to be sure, Charles. You are quite right, my dear; I remember now all about it. Yes, I must come to you, of course; everybody goes to the painter's rooms. I recollect all about it now. I went once with Mrs. Carey. But you must let me have a friend with me, Charles. You won't object to my bringing Judith, will you?"

"Yes, I shall, aunt; I shall object to it very much. It appears to me that she is a great talker,—and, in short, I think she is exactly the sort of person to disturb one. No, please, aunt; bring any one else you choose, but don't bring my cousin Judith."

She promised to do exactly as he wished, and then they parted.

The two sisters were, upon the whole, greatly pleased with their interview, but by no means sorry that it was over; and the two cousins were mutually ready to confess that they did not very well know what to make of each other.

But Charles went to bed, and dreamed that he had very nearly equalled Raffael in a portrait which he had made of Judith as Saint Cecilia; while Judith dreamed that she

was weeping bitterly, because her cousin Charles had made a caricature of Frederic when in the act of listening to a song, and confessing that he knew not whether the tune was that of a psalm or a jig.

CHAPTER LI.

MRS. DORKING had by this time taken such firm possession of Judith in the way of chaperonship, that neither for morning or evening engagements was much opportunity left her to choose where she would go.

To this, of course, Miss Elfreda was fain to submit, whether she liked it or not, as the rights of her elegant rival were not of a nature for her to contest or quarrel with. In fact, the evil, if it were one, brought a very ample atonement with it; for well as Miss Elfreda might have liked to lead her beautiful niece with her wherever she went, she liked quite as well, or even better still, perhaps, to mention in all directions the interesting fact, that the dear girl was engaged, as usual, with her elegant mother-in-law elect. This sufficed to console Miss Elfreda. And Judith herself, who would often have willingly exchanged the dignified protection of her dear Frederic's fashionable mother for the gentle and humble protection of her own dear aunt Worthington, found her consolation for this often wearisome restraint in the fortunate circumstance, that Mrs. Dorking's morning did not begin till that of her aunt Worthington was ended.

She had another great source of comfort, too, in the daily-increasing interest which it was evident Miss Elfreda began to feel for her nephew Charles. How much of this might be attributable to the extreme delight she experienced in sitting to him for her picture, and how much to the great admiration expressed for him and his talents in the family of Professor Carey, whose Westhampton reminiscences went back to the youthful days of his beautiful mother,—to which of these two causes her growing partiality for him might be most justly attributed, it would be difficult to say; that both had a good deal to do with it is quite certain, and the result was almost as many invitations for both himself and his mother to “a family dinner in Green Street,” as even Judith herself could have desired.

That this was a comfort to her, in every way, may very easily be imagined; for not only did it give her the dearly-valued pleasure of their society, but it procured it for her in

a way that was not only free from all difficulty, but all objection of any kind.

The only circumstance of her position at this time which appeared to Judith otherwise than she could reasonably wish it to be, was the rather too distinct division of herself and her existence between her friends in Mortimer Street and those in Berkeley Square.

In as far, indeed, as Mrs. Dorking herself and her stiff and stupid husband were concerned, Judith had no wish that it should be otherwise; for so keenly observing and so very reasonable a person as herself could not easily be brought to wish that elements so decidedly heterogeneous should attempt to mingle.

But the case was, of course, widely different with respect to Frederic. For not only was she persuaded that, however hostile the frivolous pursuits of his past existence might have been to the full developement of his talents, yet still she was persuaded, also, that there was that within him which would and must kindle into great intellectual superiority, if brought into contact with such a man as Charles Worthington.

In age, her affianced husband and her cousin were nearly equal; but it was far otherwise, certainly, in all that related either to general information or special study.

And yet Judith often blamed herself for dwelling so much on her consciousness of this fact.

Was it not being unreasonably *exigante*? For how was it possible for a man so eternally engaged in society as Frederic, to have found time to read and to study as Charles Worthington had read and studied?

It was *not* possible; and she ought to consider herself as one of the very happiest girls in the world for having engaged the affections of so amiable and so admirable a person, and one for whom it was so very evident that multitudes of young ladies, superior to her in every way, would be only too happy to contend, if there was any chance of their succeeding.

And then she remembered the high place which Frederic Dorking had held in the estimation of her accomplished and highly gifted friend Mrs. Chilbert, and how the dean liked and admired him.

Upon one occasion she was reproaching herself for the more than usually long time which she had suffered to elapse without answering Mrs. Chilbert's last letter. “I wonder what has been the real cause of this?”

thought she. "I do believe it is because I am afraid of saying too much about Charles Worthington. She would not think so, if she knew him."

And then she fell into a very profound reverie upon the sort of effect that Charles Worthington was likely to produce upon her friend—his voice—his taste—his extraordinary imagination—his deep feeling—his fearless spirit—and his gentle heart!

She went on thinking of all this, and all in reference to Mrs. Chilbert, till she was startled by the entrance of her maid, who brought a note from her gay, happy, brilliant *fiancé*, as gay and as brilliant as himself.

It was to tell her that, though barbarously kept at home to assist at a consultation with a pet upholsterer, who always made himself waited for, about the decorations of the dancing-rooms at the ball they were to open together that day month in Berkeley Square, he had it in commission from his mother to ask her if she felt disposed to make up a picnic breakfast-party (seeing the weather was so divinely beautiful) for the morrow? It was proposed that the spot visited should be Richmond, the mode of conveyance a steamboat, fitted up as a private barge for the occasion, with music and all proper and fitting *et cætera* on board. Subjoined was a postscript, intimating very civilly, in a direct message from Mrs. Dorking herself, that if Miss Elfreda Jenkyns would like to join the party, they should be very glad to see her.

Judith read the note, and remained for a minute or two in meditation over it.

"Mr. Frederic's man is waiting, Miss," said the abigail.

"Is he?" said Judith; and then, after another short pause, she added, "tell him that I will send an answer."

The maid retreated, and Judith was left alone. Shakspeare says there is a tide in the affairs of men; and most assuredly there is a tide also in his thoughts, which, taken at the flood, will often lead to a point which they would have never reached, if the movement had been made at a moment of less impulse.

The mind of Judith was very full of her cousin Charles, and of her aunt Worthington too, when this note arrived; and her thoughts, thus occupied, naturally mixed themselves with the thoughts suggested by the note; and thus united, on they rushed, tide and wind both seeming favourable, till they

reached a point from which they had been very distant a few short hours before.

It had repeatedly, but not very impressively, occurred to Judith before, that, considering the position in which she stood with Frederic, and considering also the cordial good humour with which her lover had treated her cousin when first introduced to him, now above a fortnight ago,—it had occurred to her to wonder a little that he, Frederic, should never yet have found time to call upon him, Charles.

But Judith knew herself to be exceedingly ignorant of all the established usages of English society; and as day after day had worn away without this event, which she was anxiously looking for, she almost succeeded in persuading herself that there must be some fixed regulation in point of time, when people were known to have entered a new abode, and that nobody ought to call upon them till that period was expired.

One obvious way of arriving at the truth on this point, yet that she omitted, would have been the consulting her aunt Elfreda.

But on the subject of her aunt Worthington and of her cousin Charles, Judith had not courage to ask any thing that might have elicited a disagreeable answer from any one. She felt that she could not have patiently endured the being told that Mrs. Dorking considered Mrs. Worthington as too completely in a rank of life distinct from herself to have permitted her thinking of paying her a visit.

Still less, oh! far less, could she bear the idea that any similar reason had prevented Frederic from calling upon Charles. And it was because she felt that she could not bear any thing of the kind patiently, poor little girl, that she did not permit herself to dwell seriously on the subject at all.

But this mention of the intended ball, this invitation to the pic-nic, (and to Richmond, too, where there were so many things that she would have given the world to look at with her cousin Charles,) all this together, particularly as her aunt Elfreda was included in the invitation, brought the hateful conclusion home to her mind that the Dorkings did not mean to notice the Worthingtons at all.

When first the possibility, and then the probability, of this came upon her, such a glow of indignation came over the heart of Judith, that she felt as if she could not breathe without difficulty; and from this really ter-

rible sensation she was only relieved by a violent burst of tears.

"And yet Frederic knows, for I have told him, how solemn was the manner in which my tenderest affection for my aunt Worthington was commanded by my dear mother with her dying breath! Does he think that after this I can separate myself from her? Does he think he can have *me* for his wife, and not have *her* for his aunt, and *Charles* for his cousin? Charles! Gracious Heaven! A creature so highly gifted! Is Frederic ashamed of him because he is an artist? Oh! if I thought this possible! But it is not possible! Nothing, no, nothing on earth shall make me believe it but his declaring to me the disgraceful fact himself! But Heaven forgive me! What a wretch I am for even thinking such a thing possible! My dear, generous, devoted Frederic! Oh, never, never shall he know how basely I have wronged him!"

She had exactly reached this point, and her elastic young spirit had just bounded up again, as it were, from the "slough of despond" to the bright regions of hope and confidence, when a gentle knock was heard at the door.

"Come in!" said Judith, who thought it was her maid bringing some other message; but when the door opened, it was her aunt Elfreda who appeared at it.

"Mr. Frederic's man has told Robert," said the anxious-looking lady, "that Mrs. Dorking is going to have a magnificent pic-nic party to-morrow, and that she has sent a note to you to ask you about it. Is all this true, Judith?"

Judith put the note she had received into her hand.

A moment sufficed to read it, but it required more than another moment for the recovery of Miss Elfreda's composure, before she could trust her voice to make any commentary on the contents.

At length, after a very deep-drawn sigh, she ejaculated, "Well, Judith! I do call that very kind, my dear! very kind indeed!"

This enthusiastic reception of her part of the invitation stifled at once in the mind of Judith, the proud little imp, an intention which had slyly insinuated itself, of refusing all participation in the pic-nic scheme herself. But though this wish, or perhaps it might be called intention, was frustrated, another intention took its place, which was at once acted upon, all foregone objections to

it being forgotten by Judith's saying, "Don't you think it will be very strange, aunt Elfreda, if the Dorkings do not invite Mrs. Worthington and Charles?"

"My dear, dear child! what are you thinking of?" replied Miss Elfreda, very solemnly, or rather dolorously, shaking her head. "You really, sometimes, my dear Judith, seem to know no more of the common laws and rules of society than a little child of five years old! Your aunt Worthington is a most lady-like really elegant-looking woman; and as to your cousin Charles, I certainly consider him as one of the most promising young men I have ever seen, and I should not wonder, Judith, if you, and even I too, were to live to see him as much the fashion as —, or, in fact, as any of the first-rate successful artists in London. But fair and soft goes far, my darling Judith. He must wait his time, like all other clever young men have done before him; and as to our attempting to push him up into fashionable society before that time arrives, we might just as well try to make peaches ripen in the sun in January. He must wait till he has acquired fame, before he can hope to enjoy it."

"Certainly, aunt Elfreda! I am quite aware of that," replied Judith. "But I am not expecting fame for him; only common civility?"

"Common civility? My darling child! I fear, on the contrary, that it is very uncommon civility that you are looking for and expecting. Use your own good sense, Judith, I do beg of you, before you take any of these disagreeable fancies into your head. Just remember, my dear, who, and what, Charles Worthington really is. It is nothing to the purpose, you know, *our* being very fond of him, and all that sort of thing. He is our blood relation, and that accounts for it. But what I want you to consider is, just what he *is*, and what he must be acknowledged to be, to other people. He is just the son of a drawing-master, Judith, who had the impudence and good luck to run away with a respectable gentleman's daughter. But this did not prevent his being a poor, and I believe a ruined, drawing-master still; and this is the only style and title that his son inherits from him. Then just ask yourself, Judith, whether you think we have any right to expect that he should at once be installed in the first circle of society in Europe? I make no mention of my poor sister, because, to do her justice, she does not appear to have a wish or a

thought beyond the situation in which her own act and deed has placed her, and therefore, on her account, you have of course no anxiety. And as to our poor dear Charles, Judith, who most certainly is one of the very finest young men that ever was seen, I can only repeat that we must have patience."

Had Miss Elfreda's harangue been one little bit less reasonable, poor Judith would have borne it a great deal better, because she might have had the relief of being avowedly angry; but as it was, she seemed beyond the reach of all comfort, save tears. And so she wept heartily.

Miss Elfreda, perhaps, might have approached somewhat nearer to a state of sympathy, had it not been for the invitation to the pic-nic; but this so entirely overpowered every other feeling, that, after having finished the speech above recited, she fixed her mind immovably upon a new bonnet, and Judith speedily found she could make her think of nothing but the fête.

"I suppose, my dear, that there cannot be any occasion for me to answer the note separately? You do not think there is, Judith, do you?"

"No, ma'am, no!" sobbed Judith.

"Pray don't cry, my darling love! It is just as if you cried only because I was invited."

"Don't say that, aunt!" said Judith, beginning to feel conscious that she was not behaving well. "Your being invited is, I think, the only thing that could make me go myself. I am sick of all their folly and finery! I am indeed! But I will write directly, aunt Elfreda, and say that you have much pleasure in accepting the invitation. That is the proper phrase, isn't it?"

"Yes, to be sure, dearest! and don't delay writing any longer. Oh, Judith! think how many hundreds of elegant and beautiful women would give a little finger to be of Mrs. Dorking's pic-nic breakfast at Richmond. You are spoiled, my dear, you are indeed, or you never could be so unnaturally indifferent to it yourself."

"I fear I am spoiled!" replied Judith, with some bitterness, "but not exactly in the way you mean, aunt Elfreda. If I were unspoiled, if I were only just the same girl that I was when mamma told me to find out my aunt Worthington, and always to love her dearly, if I were quite as unspoiled as I was then, I very much doubt whether any thing, any engagement, any affection whatever, would

make me consent to take part in an amusement from which she and her son were of necessity excluded."

"And I very much doubt, Judith, whether, if your dear mamma could hear what you are now saying, she would approve it at all more than I now do. Just ask yourself, my dear child, what it is that you wish and expect."

"I wish and expect nothing, aunt Elfreda, but that the nearest and dearest relations I have in the world should be treated with kindness, or at least with civility, by those to whom I am about to unite myself by ties closer still," said Judith, somewhat sternly.

"I beg your pardon, my dear, but you do ask a great deal more than that," replied her aunt; "and I rather think you ask more than it would be in the power of those to grant, whom you blame so very harshly for not granting it. I know a good deal, Judith, about the rules and regulations of London society; and I do most sincerely believe, that if Frederic Dorking, by way of proving his devotion to you, were either to coax or scold his mother into inviting Charles Worthington to join her party to Richmond, he would find that, instead of being considered as one of the society, he would be stared at first, and then neglected as an intruder."

"Not if he were *properly* introduced to them," said Judith, sternly.

"What do you call properly introduced, my dear?" demanded Miss Elfreda. "Would you have him introduced as what he is, or as what he is not?"

"Most surely I would have him introduced as what he is," returned Judith, indignantly. "He might at least be introduced as my near relation."

"But could that be all, Judith? Would that satisfy the curiosity of people?" said the reasonable Miss Elfreda. "And do you think it would be fair, do you think it would be generous, to take advantage of Mr. Frederic Dorking's affection, which indeed I do believe could deny you nothing,—but would it be generous, I say, to tax that affection by forcing upon him the task of telling all these fine people of rank and fashion that the young man is the son of a person who was a drawing-master at Rome? I dare say," she added, "that he *would* do it, if you insisted upon it as a proof of his love; but if he did, I think it very likely that his mother would never speak to him again."

Judith turned very pale; but after the interval of a moment she said, "Perhaps you

are right, aunt Elfreda. I would not willingly act ungenerously towards Frederic. Do not let us talk about it any more now. I will write the note immediately."

Miss Elfreda took the hint, and left the room perfectly satisfied at the effect of her eloquence. But her eloquence had perhaps gone rather farther than she had intended. She had proved too much.

CHAPTER LII.

JUDITH kept her promise. She wrote the note immediately, and wrote it, too, quite as her aunt wished her to do; that is to say, she accepted for them both the invitation to the pic-nic, and, having written and sent this important document, she sat down to think.

It has rarely happened, perhaps, that any one in possession of the many good things which constitute happiness, and afflicted by so little that appeared likely to destroy it, ever felt so heartily miserable as Judith Maitland did at that moment.

It was not that she was insensible to the blessings that surrounded her, nor was she of a character to exaggerate any of the ordinary evils of life if they had befallen her; but she was now beset by a species of sorrow that she knew not how to brave, nor how to bear.

Could all her philosophy teach her to think lightly of circumstances which seemed to threaten poor Charles, and through him his dear mother also, with the continuance of a position which must inevitably repress his hopes, paralyse his courage, and render of slow or none effect all the admirable talents and fine qualities of which she had felt so proud?

It was as clear as light that her own brilliant prospects were destined to prove an injury to him.

Had Frederic Dorking, instead of being what he was, with his revenue of thousands, his coronet, his proud father, his fine mother, and his own undisputed reputation of being one of the most fashionable men about town, had he, instead of all this, been as humble an individual as herself, how very much happier should she have been! But the telling herself this did no good. It neither altered his position nor her own, nor could it in any way assist in changing that of Charles Worthington.

As this last fact presented itself, and became established in her mind, it occurred to

her to ask herself what she should wish to make of him, did she possess the power of deciding what his situation should be. "Would I make an idle fine gentleman of him?" thought she.

A crimson glow accompanied the answer that her heart suggested. No! Not for her own right hand would she have robbed his of its cunning! Again and again she meditated both upon the question and the answer; and not all her meditations, no, nor all her suffering either, and her eyes were still overflowing with tears, could lead to any other answer.

"Then what do I weep for?" said she, in a sudden paroxysm of common sense. "This is worse than merely being young and childish, as Mrs. Dorking so often calls me in the midst of her elegant caresses. I must be wayward, wilful, and perverse in no common degree, if I am positively sitting here in lamentation over that which I confess to myself I would not change if I had the power. And what then would I have altered?" continued her soliloquy. "My own situation? Am I then tired of Frederic? Am I faithless to him? No, dearest Frederic, no! I love you dearly, dearly! And if so, how can I wish to rob him of what I know he values highly? Where would be my love, and where would be my justice, if I could wish to place him in what he would consider as a worse condition, merely to save my cousin from the possible mortification of feeling that they were not upon an equality? This will never do!" she murmured, in conclusion. "I do believe that it is my own paltry vanity that is wounded because my cousin is not included in this party; and if so, it is not the pomp that must take physic, but the trumpery feeling that leads me to fancy it of importance."

And, having reached this point, she began making a variety of excellent resolutions, all tending to the government of her future conduct, upon the principle that her affection for Charles and his mother must show itself in a more rational way than in weeping because they were not what they were not, and what, moreover, they did not wish to be.

And so she said nothing about the pic-nic to Mrs. Worthington or to Charles; and most assuredly they never said any thing to her either about that or any other of the engagements which so often prevented them being together, when it was often pretty obvious that both parties would have wished it.

The pic-nic came off with all the splendour

that was likely to attend a fête given by so influential a personage as Mrs. Dorking ; and Judith, in pursuance of her wise resolutions, very earnestly endeavoured to persuade herself that she enjoyed it. As long as the pretty voyage lasted, she in some degree succeeded in this, for the weather was bright, the river beautiful, everybody kind, and Frederic devoted.

Before they left their gaudy bark, however, she felt herself very weary, and began to suspect that she was a bad sailor on a river, though a good one on the sea ; for her head ached, and her eyes ached, and altogether she began to fancy that she must be decidedly unwell.

"Perhaps," thought she, "what I feel may be the first symptoms of such a fever as my little sister died of. I well remember that her dear head ached too. Well ! and if it be so, what then ? Why, then I shall be with my own dear mother again ; and there is nothing very terrible in that."

It is not very likely that any single individual, of all that gay and gallant company, would have believed in the perfect sincerity of spirit with which this thought was breathed to her own soul by Judith. And, in truth, there must have been something at work within her deeply hostile to the light-hearted gaiety that seemed to inspire them all ; for the sallies which produced the most radiant smiles, nay, even lively bursts of low-toned, elegant, musical laughter from others, fell on her ear with a sort of leaden dullness that made her long to go to sleep. And then the sun grew brighter and brighter, and her parasol, the gift of Mrs. Dorking, was of white silk, and she did not feel the imperfection of its shade to be at all less painful because it was trimmed with magnificent lace. And then from her parasol, which she was quite ready to declare had made her extremely ill, she turned her eyes upon her exquisite dress, the choice of which she had dutifully left to Frederic's mother, at his particular request, and there was no part of it that she did not contemplate with extreme dislike. And yet it had really nothing objectionable in it, being composed of primrose-coloured silk, covered with a mixture of fine muslin, and finer lace.

"Fancy Charles composing a picture, and putting a young girl into such a dress as this !" thought she. And yet this thought, though it appeared to her exceedingly comical and ridiculous, brought tears into her eyes.

"I certainly must be ill," was the thought that followed, naturally enough, upon her becoming conscious of this unaccountable weakness ; and, in order to hide it, she turned herself round, and hung her head over the side of the vessel. This was exactly the worst thing she could have done, for, having obtained this advantageous position, she took advantage of it, and thrice had Frederic pronounced her name before she felt herself in a condition to turn round and meet his eye.

Even when she did so, though the tears were gone, she did not look like her bright self, and was at last obliged to confess that her head ached, which she attributed to the unusual heat of the day.

"And you an Indian ?" cried Frederic.

"It is very true," she replied, "but, somehow or other, the Indian sun is different."

"Is it ?" returned he, with a good-humoured smile ; and at the same time seizing upon a huge umbrella, which was lying among the ship's stores, and spreading it as a canopy over them both, though the gaily striped awning ought to have contented them. "I think it must be the reflection from the water ; look at it no more, my Judith !"

The gentle kindness of his whispered accent seemed to fall on her heart like a reproach, and she rallied her spirits, and laughed with the next person she saw laugh, though she knew not at what.

And now their little voyage was over, and their anchor cast ; and then the whole party were invited to go on shore, and enter the carriages which were in waiting to take them to the Park. To Judith this "seeing the Park" was the great event of the day, but it was so to her alone, for she was the only one to whom the sight was new ; and this part of the scheme was probably added to the voyage chiefly for the purpose of affording time and opportunity for the attendants to spread the banquet on the deck. But, like many other expeditions of the same kind, its enjoyment was destroyed, at least to her, by the too elaborate preparations made to ensure its being perfect. To enjoy Richmond Park, it is necessary to walk in it, and how was it possible to do this in silk shoes ? How was it possible, in short, to leave their delightful open carriages, which altogether made the most brilliant display that had been witnessed there during the season ; how was it possible to *get out* and walk ?

The proposition, though made with toler-

able boldness by Frederic, was received with a universal "Oh dear, no! I had rather not walk, if you please!" And Judith was obliged to submit, which she did with the more resignation from recollecting, at last, the extreme absurdity of seeing such dresses as her own, and those of the rest of the party, exposed to the perils of a walk!

And so the carriages took the usual round, and then returned again to the water's edge, where they daintily re-embarked, without spot or blemish; and this operation being performed, something very like a universal chorus might have been heard, as the spectacle of the splendid and cleverly arranged banquet met the eyes of the company, and "I never was so hungry in my life!" was now uttered with as much energy as the "I had rather not walk!" had been spoken an hour before.

And now Mrs. Dorking was in all her glory. This was by no means the first pic-nic, as she chose to call it, that she had given on the silver bosom of the Thames, for it was a species of fête at which she presided with peculiar pleasure, from having been told, about a dozen years before, that she was like a celebrated picture of Cleopatra, which represented that dark-browed beauty in her barge.

She never dressed her still handsome person so carefully, and never bestowed so many minute instructions about the preparations for any fête, as she did for her breakfasts upon these occasions. And certainly she was not mistaken in believing that the boat and the banquet, upon the present occasion, were arrayed in such a manner as to produce a very splendid effect when she returned with her party on board.

Bright and brilliant draperies for the awning, and bright and brilliant ornaments for the table, united to produce a blaze of rich colouring that really might have contented any Eastern queen. And of course it is quite superfluous to add, that the table was luxuriantly, as well as richly, spread.

But this display was not all upon which the vanity of Mrs. Dorking meant to feed itself upon this occasion. There happened to be a gentleman of strawberry-leaf rank among her guests, who had a vehement passion for music. It was only lately that she had been fortunate enough to make his acquaintance, and, among her never-ending little drawing-room intrigues, the one upon which she was at the present moment the most earnestly bent, was the converting his

Grace into an *habitué* in her saloon. In order to do this, she knew that she must give him good music, and she did give him good music.

Not, indeed, that she knew or cared at all more about the science than did her son Frederic; but people who are as desperately purposed to be cited as among the first in the brilliant struggle for party-giving fame, must neglect *nothing* which can contribute to success. Very high rank, indeed, saves an immense amount of labour and pains in this business; but without it nothing short of ceaseless exertion can succeed.

Mrs. Dorking, therefore, at her pretty highly-finished house in Berkeley Square, very often took care to have very excellent music. It was this which first attained for her the acquaintance of his Grace, and it was this which had now induced him to make one of the party in her "barge."

But on this occasion there were no professional artists, and Mrs. Dorking had trusted a good deal to the effect of Judith's splendid voice, which she happened to know that the duke had not yet heard.

The animated and animating breakfast over, therefore, Mrs. Dorking drew near to Judith, whom she considered as very completely her own property, and as part and parcel of that vast variety of pretty ornamental things upon the possession of which she prided herself, and laying her hand caressingly on her shoulder said, "Now, dearest Miss Maitland! This is exactly the moment for us to listen to your charming voice. The light breeze that fanned our awning half an hour ago is hushed now, and, when you begin, every other sound will be hushed also."

"You must excuse me, Mrs. Dorking," replied Judith, with as much composure, and as much decision too, as if her future splendid destiny was to be as independent of Mrs. Dorking as was that of the bird that was flying over head.

"Excuse you?" repeated Mrs. Dorking, in an accent much more honestly corresponding with her genuine feelings than was quite usual with her. "No, my dear, if you please, it is you who must excuse me; for I feel absolutely compelled to confess, that upon this occasion I cannot stand upon ceremony, and that I must have you sing."

Perhaps if Frederic Dorking had been standing before her at that moment, looking at her with his loving eyes, she might not have found the spirit of rebellion strong,

enough within her to answer as she did. But he was not only out of her sight, but out of her mind too, at that moment, and she replied not only disobediently, but very stiffly, "I cannot sing to-day, Mrs. Dorking."

What might have been the rejoinder, had no curious observers been there to listen, it is impossible to say; but Mrs. Dorking was too thoroughly well-drilled in all exercises to be performed in public, to permit any feeling to ruffle the perfect *tenue* of her demeanour; she therefore acquiesced with a silent bow, and retired.

But the fire that is smoothly and carefully covered up will retain its heat greatly longer than the fuel that is permitted to blaze up into flame.

The impression made by this on the mind of Judith was slight at the moment. She really did not feel well, and truly was neither in mind nor body in a state to sing, without making a painful exertion. This painful exertion, however, might have been made, had there been something a little less imperious in Mrs. Dorking's manner of asking for it. Judith had not an atom of the feeling commonly called pride about her. She neither considered herself to be a person of fashion, nor had she the least wish to be one; but as little did she wish, or intend, to put herself under the authority sometimes assumed by those who filled that exalted station; it was this feeling, doubtless, which furnished the courage necessary to say "no," when it would have been disagreeable to her to say "yes." There might also have been some little inclination to open the eyes of Mrs. Dorking to the important fact, that it was not her intention to live without a will of her own; and in this it is possible she succeeded, even beyond her intention at the moment.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE portrait of Miss Elfreda, which was in oils, and the size of life, went on rapidly, and satisfactorily even to the young artist, though in general he was not very easily pleased with his own performances.

Judith was equally delighted and amazed by the rapidity and the excellence of the work. Mrs. Worthington was evidently greatly pleased with it. But as for Miss Elfreda herself, she was in ecstasies! The painting a real likeness of a rather ugly elderly woman, in such a manner as to please her, is certainly by no means an easy task,

and the young artist deserved considerable credit for his ingenuity, as well as for his skill.

He had felt at once, that if he attempted a portrait of Miss Elfreda Jenkyns in her drawing-room costume, he was lost. But he had speedily discovered that his aunt Elfreda was not only a learned lady, but, as she confessed herself, a little romantic; and on this hint he spoke, and found little or no difficulty in persuading her that she was not a sort of person to have her portrait taken in an ordinary every-day style, and that as he was conscious of being more likely to succeed in a fanciful imitation of her features than if she sat to him in the fashion of the day, he should like to make a Sibyl of her.

"I do not quite promise," he modestly added, "to make your portrait a rival to Raffael's, but at any rate, you know, I may imitate the head-dress, and the flowing drapery. Miss Elfreda was in raptures at this proposal, and though she might perhaps have been better satisfied with the features had they been portrayed a little less faithfully, she was perfectly ready to agree with her nephew that the head was more picturesque as it was.

The admiration expressed by the Carey family, who were freely admitted to Charles's painting-room, as well as the more critical praise bestowed upon the picture by one or two well-known artists, whom Mr. Carey had brought there, so worked upon the feelings of Miss Elfreda, that in utter forgetfulness of all she had said to Judith on the propriety of not attempting to establish a visiting acquaintance between Frederic Dorking and her humble relatives, she eagerly asked him, upon his calling at the moment of her return from a sitting, if he would go with them the next morning to see her portrait.

Now it must not be presumed, because nothing has been said upon the subject, that nothing had passed between Mrs. Dorking and her son concerning "the magnificent-looking young man," whom he had asked her to patronise.

On the contrary, a great deal had passed between them on this subject. In the first instance, his request for "the assistance of her powerful patronage for a young artist in whose success he was greatly interested," had been received, as all such requests from him were sure to be, very graciously.

Had there been a little less of self-seeking vanity on the part of the mother, and a little

more individuality and steadiness of opinion on the part of the son, the close union between them would have been really admirable. But however well we may like to see a mother *proud*, as it is called, of her son, or a son *devoted* to his mother, we do not, I think, any of us like to see a middle-aged lady trading in society upon the credit of having a wealthy and a comely son; and still less, perhaps, do we like to see a son yield his own intellect to that of his mother to a degree that never leaves him in the possession of that firm confidence in himself, without which no lord of the creation can ever feel and find that he is quite in his right place.

Mrs. Dorking, as usual, listened to Frederic's earnest recommendation of young Worthington to her patronage with attention and interest, and declared herself confident of being able immediately to obtain some sitters for him. But her son Frederic was well aware that it would not do to leave the disclosure of the young artist's affinity to his affianced Judith to any one but himself; and he, therefore, with a great deal of delicacy, and, as he thought, with a great deal of skill, proceeded to state this disagreeable fact to his mother.

Had Mrs. Dorking been less practically and completely aware of the complete independence of her son upon the will of his father, and even upon her own, her manner of receiving this astounding intelligence would have been very unlike what it was. In that case, she would have made very short work of it, and Mr. Frederic would very speedily have been made to understand, that he was to decide between his parents and his *position in society*, and his pretty promised bride.

But, as it was, the affair was wholly different. Frederic's place in society did not depend on his parents. This was one great reason, and decidedly the greatest, for his mother to bear with him patiently whenever he appeared inclined to be wilful, which, to say the truth, was not often. But the fortune, the beauty, and the grace of Judith rendered her yielding to her son's will, in the present instance, a matter of very little difficulty.

It is true, nevertheless, that there was a certain Lady Augusta Trevors, upon whom her maternal eye had fixed itself as the absolute perfection which she should wish to possess in a daughter-in-law. But the tone and manner assumed by her really amiable

and very observant son, when he informed her, on returning from Clayton Hall, that he returned an affianced man, at once convinced her that she should lose more than she was at all likely to gain by attempting to interfere with his arrangements. Besides, the young man made out a very fair case of eligibility; and when she saw the lovely graceful girl who had so suddenly captivated this fastidious son, she not only ceased to wonder at the event, but, without much difficulty, became reconciled to it.

And so far every thing had gone on smoothly; but though Frederic was too passionately in love with Judith to be shaken for an instant in his fidelity by listening to her touching history of the adventures and distresses of her aunt and cousin, and though every feeling of his heart had led him to wish, and to promise, the exertion of his best services in assisting the young artist, it required but one moment of solitary reflection, after he had left her, to bring home to him the disagreeable fact that his mother must, sooner or later, be made acquainted with this troublesome blot in the escutcheon of her intended daughter-in-law.

Such being the case, he wisely determined to get it over immediately; and he did so, not without perceiving that the intelligence produced a very painful sort of emotion, but without any *very* decided attempt to alter the *statu quo* of affairs in consequence of it. The whole tone and manner of the interview, however, left one fact very strongly impressed upon his mind; namely, that if he wished to preserve *la belle harmonie* at present subsisting between his mother and Judith, his only course was to let all mention, and, if possible, all memory of the artist cousin fade and vanish out of sight and hearing as speedily as possible. The doing so had been made apparently easy by the proud forbearance of Judith herself, who avoided the mention of the Worthingtons quite as sedulously as Frederic did. And it may, therefore, easily be supposed, that this sudden proposal to visit the young artist's painting-room was equally unwelcome and unexpected. Frederic Dorking, however, had upon all occasions too much self-command to be visibly disconcerted by it. Had Judith thought proper to look at him, she would have perceived, perhaps, something of heightened colour, but his manner of saying, "Yes, certainly; with great pleasure," in reply to Miss Elfreda's proposal, was perfectly unembarrassed; and

the result was, that, in about half an hour afterwards, they found themselves in Charles Worthington's painting-room, gazing at the portrait of the said Miss Elfreda, in her character of a Sibyl.

The manners of the two young men to each other showed plainly enough to Judith what was passing in the mind of each. Frederic was gay, friendly, and familiar; Charles cold, reserved, and stiff. Even Miss Elfreda, though so greatly absorbed by her portrait and all that the "accomplished Mr. Frederic" said concerning it, perceived, from the unusual manner of her nephew, that he was not particularly delighted by the visit, and then she began very bitterly to reproach herself for having proposed it.

Repentance, however, came too late; all she could now do was to affect great hurry to get home again on particular business, and the visit, therefore, was made as short as was well possible. But it was nevertheless long enough to produce a most painful effect on Judith.

Charles did not like it; Frederic did not like it; Mrs. Worthington disliked it extremely; and, before it was over, short as it was, Miss Elfreda felt frightened out of her wits at the mischief she had done.

But it was Judith only who felt that every look and every word that passed was of importance to the future.

She, poor girl, returned to the solitude of her own chamber sick at heart; and it was a sickness which beyond all others it is the most difficult for meditation to cure, for she felt in a perfect chaos of uncertainty as to what she *ought* to do. Young as she was, she felt perfectly capable of sacrificing inclination to duty, and of abiding firmly by a decision so dictated. But not for half an hour together could she keep steady in her opinion as to what that duty was. To give up Frederic, to break her promised faith to a man who had shown himself so sincerely attached to her, could not be thought of without the consciousness that she was meditating a positive sin while thinking of it. And yet the forming a connexion that she plainly saw must finally sever all that was most valuable and precious in her union with the Worthingtons, could scarcely be considered less so.

She felt, indeed, that there would be no difficulty, after she became of age, in making such pecuniary arrangements as might fully satisfy her conscience on that point; there, at least, she was quite sure that the character

and conduct of Frederic would prove perfect. But would *that* suffice to make her feel that she was fulfilling the will of her mother?

Tears of very bitter anguish flowed down her cheeks as her heart answered this terrible question.

Her unhappiness from all this was very greatly increased, too, by the conviction that on this subject she should not find sympathy, at least not full and entire sympathy, even from Mrs. Chilbert. She felt so sure that, if she were to confess to her all she was suffering from this cause, she should be answered by reasons more in unison with the specious arguments by which her aunt Elfreda had silenced her than by any that would find an echo in her own heart, that she resolutely avoided the theme altogether in writing to her; and the charm of this once dear correspondence was sadly lessened by the joyous tone of triumph concerning her future prospects which was addressed to her, while she was trembling as she anticipated the heart-achings to which these brilliant prospects must inevitably lead.

As yet, however, there were still many delightful hours for Judith produced by her having found these poor relations; and she was at least rewarded for her good-natured compact with her aunt Elfreda respecting retaining the carriage, by the facility with which it enabled her to pass in Mortimer Street that precious portion of the day which preceded all fashionable demands upon her time.

The characteristic rapidity with which Charles had seized upon all the resemblance to his aunt Elfreda which it was his purpose to convey to the canvass soon brought the necessity for her sitting to him to an end, and her lectures and her visitings were restored to her, not more to her own satisfaction, perhaps, than to that of her sister, her niece, and her nephew; for this trio had still an immense deal to say and an immense deal to hear amongst them, in which it was quite impossible that any other human being could feel much interest.

The hours so passed were for the most part spent in the painting-room of Charles, for it was there that, very evidently, his mother best loved to be. And attraction enough might certainly be found in it, of all sorts, to prevent Judith from differing from her aunt Worthington in thinking it the most agreeable place in which they could be.

One of the *petits soins* that Judith had de-

lighted to bestow upon her aunt, was the hiring a piano-forte and placing it in the room; for her somewhat eccentric young son was in the habit of making the arts wait upon each other, as he called it, one stepping in to refresh the other when she was weary. And in this way the kindred voices practised and improved together in a way that might have tempted Mrs. Chilbert to doubt, had she been present there, whether after all any "position" could be found that might atone for the loss of all that might be enjoyed there.

CHAPTER LIV.

AND now the night so long fixed for Mrs. Dorking's magnificent ball arrived. Judith had been less frequently a guest in Berkeley Square than during the weeks which immediately followed their arrival in town, a circumstance which was apparently very naturally accounted for by Frederic, as arising partly from the multitude of his mother's evening engagements, which most certainly always go on with a *crescendo* movement as the London season advances; and partly, of late, also, from the state of confusion into which the drawing-rooms had been thrown by the erection of a temporary saloon over the leads, upon which the back drawing-room opened.

All this sounded very natural and necessary, and proved not only highly satisfactory to poor Judith, but even cleared away from the mind of the sensitive Miss Elfreda every misty little idea which, at one time, had got hold of her, that Mrs. Dorking was not so devotedly attached to her daughter-in-law elect as she had appeared to be when first introduced to her.

But that misty little idea had not arisen in Miss Elfreda's sensitive mind absolutely from nothing. There was a difference,—even Frederic, the unsuspecting Frederic, was aware of that; the only question was, as to the cause of it.

Was it wholly owing to the pressure of Mrs. Dorking's engagements, and to the operations going on in her drawing-rooms? or was it wholly, or even partly, owing to the steady firmness of Judith Maitland's tone when she refused to sing on board Mrs. Dorking's picnic barge?

Judith herself had very decidedly made up her mind on the subject. Judith herself, young as she was, though now, poor thing, prematurely old from the too constant pressure of anxious thoughts, Judith herself had

not the slightest doubt upon the subject. She might be rather said to know, than to think, that she had ceased to be Mrs. Dorking's pride and pet. And yet that accomplished lady had never yet remitted, especially in the presence of her son, any of the entirely outward and obviously visible signs of observant attention.

But, in truth, the link was broken which, for a few short weeks, had bound her willingly to the beautiful little heiress.

It has been clearly stated that the right and title of Frederic Dorking to rather a distinguished place in the English world of fashion was no doubtful one, and his mother was not a person likely to estimate this too lightly; nor can it be doubted that, had her wishes or her will regulated the choice of her son, a far more brilliant marriage than that upon which he had himself decided would have been found for him. But she had yielded without a struggle to his will; first, because she had little hope of combating it with success, and secondly, because she was quite aware that he might have chosen worse. Then came the charm of the pretty Judith herself, her beauty, her natural elegance, and her magnificent voice. Her yielding gentleness, too, went far towards removing every thing like opposition to the wishes of her son. Mrs. Dorking might have called it later by another name; but as long as her anxious wish to please her had given the appearance of yielding gentleness to the manner of Judith, it had really gone very far towards making her proud mother-in-law elect really and truly confess, even to herself, that she was contented with her; for after all, perhaps, there was nothing so truly precious to Mrs. Dorking as the power of having her own way.

No great effort, therefore, can be necessary to make the reader understand, with tolerable clearness, the species of feeling likely to have been generated in the mind of this lady by the resolute composure with which Judith had refused to sing, when she had enticed a duke on board her painted bark expressly for the purpose of hearing her. There can be no occasion to dwell upon this in order to make it intelligible; but a word or two may be necessary in defence of Judith. The character of Judith was a mixture, and by no means an uncommon one, of gentleness and firmness. Her gentleness was the effect of that peaceful sort of temperament which loves tranquillity too well to sacrifice it in a struggle for trifles.

Her firmness arose from qualities that had more to do with her intellect, and less with her constitution. Had no duty, founded both on high principle and high feeling, interfered with that which she felt due to the mother of her intended husband, Judith was very capable of schooling herself into a sort of habitual submission to Mrs. Dorking, for the sake of saving herself, and Frederic also, from any thing and every thing approaching domestic contest with her.

But no sooner had the bitter truth been made evident to her, both by her own observation and the incontrovertible reasonings of her aunt Elfreda, that if she kept her plighted faith to Frederic, she could only save herself from the utter abandonment of her aunt Worthington by a steadfast, steady, and unshrinking resolution not to yield herself to the government of Mrs. Dorking in any of her own individual actions, than she resolved at once to make that lady clearly understand that she did not consider the relation between them as one that demanded implicit obedience.

Such was the result of Judith's night thoughts; but Mrs. Dorking had her night thoughts, too, and they were quite as secret, and pretty nearly as resolute, as those of the young heiress.

It was rather more than a year before, that is to say, it was at the very beginning of the last London season, that Mrs. Dorking had conceived a project for the marriage of her son, the disappointment of which had cost her much chagrin. The project was an ambitious project, for the lady was high-born, well endowed, and extremely lovely; and there is no doubt that when Frederic first became acquainted with her, he had neither expressed nor felt any repugnance to this high flight of maternal ambition; but ere long the young man perceived, or at any rate thought he did, that the Lady Augusta Trevors was a little capricious in her conduct towards him. There were moments when he certainly had no reason to complain of anything like a cold or repulsive manner in the high-born beauty; so much the contrary, indeed, that he began to think his mother knew what she was about, and that, perhaps, the wisest thing he could do would be to fall in love with her.

But before this dutiful idea had had time to ripen, or to take any very firm possession of him, something in the lady's manner caused him to doubt what he had before thought obvious enough; and, being by no means of a

disposition to endure this species of caprice, he very suddenly drew off, and the acquaintance between them, which had begun to attract a little gossiping attention, dwindled away to a mere bow, to the inexpressible mortification of Mrs. Dorking.

Soon after this little flirtation had been brought to a close, the lady went to Paris with a married sister, and had remained there during the whole winter.

She was now making her re-appearance in London, handsomer than ever; and whatever might have been the cause of the coldness which had offended Frederic, it had either vanished, or, at any rate, had not extended to his mother, for Lady Augusta's manner of renewing her acquaintance with her was peculiarly cordial and flattering.

What look, what word, what smile, or what frown of the noble beauty first put it into Mrs. Dorking's head that it was not yet too late for Frederic to win her, could his present engagement be broken, it matters not to seek for or to dwell upon.

That such a thought had entered Mrs. Dorking's head is certain; and at first the only feeling produced by it was that of deep and bitter vexation, for she did not dare to hope that his now hateful engagement *could* be broken.

But the thought once sown was not likely to perish in her mind, nor did it perish; and before her long-projected ball was over, she had seen so much on the part of the lady to strengthen her belief, that, despite the seeming impossibility of accomplishing her object, she suddenly determined to attempt it.

Nor was Mrs. Dorking in any degree mistaken in the notion she had conceived respecting the feelings of Lady Augusta Trevors towards her son.

Had she been equally observing or equally acute at the period of their first acquaintance, a good deal of suffering might have been spared. The facts of the case may be stated in few words: Lady Augusta Trevors was, and had been, from the earliest period of her acquaintance with Frederic Dorking, most decisively and vehemently in love with him. She was a beautiful, proud, high-spirited, animated, and rather intelligent girl, who, from having been the handsomest, and by much the youngest, of her family, had been very completely spoiled. Naturally of a vehement and impassioned character, all her impulses grew almost into passions; and when her eye, her fancy, nay, truly, her heart itself,

were caught by Frederic Dorking, the young lady almost learned to tremble herself at her own vehemence.

The variations in her manner to him must rather have done her honour than the reverse, had they been rightly understood, for they arose solely from the terrible, and but too well-grounded, fear that he loved her not as she loved him.

Desperate was the struggle by which she enabled herself, first, almost to break off the acquaintance, and then to take refuge from the danger of renewing it in flight. The remedy she had applied with such praiseworthy courage had appeared to answer. It was really less from pride than from principle that she had acted in leaving England; and it was the same praiseworthy impulse that not only sustained her courage, but enabled her to seek and find amusement and interest abroad.

She believed herself to be thoroughly and for ever cured of the feeling that had caused her so much suffering, and returned to London, and all its spring-tide gaiety, as fully determined to join in it, and enjoy herself, as the most heart-whole young lady in it.

One of the first things she heard after her arrival, in the way of fashionable news, was the intended marriage of Frederic Dorking, and she bore it well. Perhaps she bore it too well, for had she felt a little less confident in her own strength, she might not have been rash enough to test it quite as severely as she did.

She retained a sort of grateful and almost affectionate recollection of the many instances of marked attention and kindness which she had received from Mrs. Dorking, and she determined, now that all danger of farther folly on her own part was so completely over, to prove to the mother of Frederic by every means in her power, not only that she remembered her kindness, but that she retained no trace of the feelings which she strongly suspected that lady once attributed to her on the subject of her son, during the dangerous month or two that preceded her departure for Paris.

The re-appearance of Lady Augusta was critical. She was in time to appear at Mrs. Dorking's ball, and certainly was one of the loveliest young women there.

But Mrs. Dorking must have been sorely disappointed, if she fancied that her appearance, brilliant as it was, could attract the attention of her son, or cause him for a single moment to forget that Judith was there also,

there as his affianced wife, and lovelier, oh! lovelier far, than any other fair one in the room, let her claims to beauty be what they might.

But though Frederic really seemed to forget that there was any other woman there who deserved to be looked at, the case was different with Judith. She was greatly struck with the beauty of Lady Augusta Trevors, and looked at her repeatedly with such marked attention, that her beautiful ladyship could scarcely fail to observe it; and having learnt,—for who in the room had not? that the slight bright-eyed creature who gazed at her so earnestly was the young Indian heiress to whom her once-worshipped Frederic was about to be married, she took it into her speculating head and resolute heart, that she should like to be introduced to her.

“That will be *la pierre de touche*,” thought she. “If I can really stand and look at her, and talk to her without wincing, I may consider my cure as perfect.”

And in pursuance of this whim, and, perhaps, a little for the purpose of displaying to Mrs. Dorking how far she was from ever having thought of Frederic herself, she begged that lady to do her the honour of presenting Miss Maitland to her. “I understand that she is to be nearly related to you some day, Mrs. Dorking,” said she; “besides I think her so pretty!”

So the presentation took place, and Mrs. Dorking, after having performed the ceremony required of her, thought proper to stand beside the two beautiful girls for a few minutes, for the purpose, probably, of watching the effect of this interview upon Lady Augusta.

And there it was, and then it was, that the keen-eyed Mrs. Dorking looked for, found, and noted enough of emotion in that expressive and beautiful face, to persuade her that if, *par impossible*, her son Frederic could be led to woo, Lady Augusta Trevors might still, *very possibly*, be won.

CHAPTER LV.

THE feelings of the particularly ill-assorted party, which I have mentioned as having assembled before the portrait of Miss Elfreda Jenkyns in the painting-room of Charles Worthington, were not, as I have already told the reader, either collectively or individually, agreeable, and, with one single exception, every person who had been there

present determined that, as far as he or she were concerned, the same ill-assorted party should not assemble there again.

This exception was to be found in the person of Frederic Dorking. As to the various feelings and various reasons which led the rest of the party to form the above-mentioned resolution, they are all, I think, too obvious to require explanation. But not so as to the contrary opinion entertained on the subject by Frederic.

Though very far from being prone to suspect or discover motives and feelings in his fellow creatures which it was their wish to keep concealed, Frederic did suspect that his lovely Judith was not, or perhaps he only went so far as to think she *might* not be, perfectly contented with the degree of notice which he and his mother (his father counted for no more than the crest on their armorial bearings) had taken of her artist cousin.

He had not quite forgotten, though he did not quite like to remember, how explicitly he had promised Judith that he should be patronised; and he had not at all forgotten, though it was extremely disagreeable to him to remember, that nothing of any kind whatever had been done to redeem this promise. To himself and his own conscience he stood more than excused for this, by knowing that neither airs nor idleness had had any share in his remissness, but that he had remained inert, and in a great degree uncertain, as to what it might be best to do, in order to please his future wife without desperately offending his mother.

But all these obliging thoughts concerning Charles, and the services he still hoped to render him, were wholly distinct from any notion of cultivating his acquaintance as a gentleman, as a companion, or even as an acquaintance, who might occasionally visit at his father's house. The visiting at his father's house, indeed, was so totally out of the question, that the idea never even occurred to him in the shape of an annoyance, from his feeling that it was either probable or possible. But he often thought, and with all his characteristic good nature, that when he and Judith were married, they might perhaps often receive him, and his poor sickly-looking mother too, in a quiet way, and be really a comfort to them.

But as to his fine mother, and her fine house, being a comfort to any one, he was much too rational for any such idea to enter his head; and thus between his own good

intentions, and his consciousness that it was better to keep his mother altogether clear of what he certainly felt to be an embarrassment, he had not troubled himself much about the matter, till this compulsory visit to the young man's painting-room had brought all his promised patronage back to his memory; while, at the same time, he fancied that there was something a little like a cloud on the fair brow of his beautiful Judith.

Instead, therefore, of leaving Mortimer Street with any determination of avoiding it for the future, he made a strong mental memorandum, as he turned from the door, that he would not permit himself again to become so thoughtlessly oblivious of those who dwelt there.

And how did he redeem this self-made promise? The manner, considering all the circumstances, was whimsical enough.

The Lady Augusta Trevors would not have been greatly flattered, could she have been made aware how very complete the oblivion of herself and her beauty had been in the mind of Frederic Dorking, after she had withdrawn herself from the circles in which he used to meet her. Even the caprice of which he had believed her guilty had not only been forgiven, but utterly forgotten; and when he saw her enter his mother's ball-room, his only thought concerning her was that she really looked handsomer than ever, and that she certainly was a very lovely girl indeed.

But a vastly stronger degree of interest in her was awakened when he saw her in the act of talking, with an air of very flattering attention, to his Judith. He immediately joined them, shook hands very cordially with Lady Augusta, but without perceiving, as his mother did, that she trembled from head to foot, and immediately asked her to dance.

He was in high spirits, and rattled away on all sorts of subjects at a great rate. He was pleased with his mother's brilliant ball, pleased with his beautiful Judith, and pleased with her beautiful dress. He was pleased, too, very much pleased, by the notice which Lady Augusta Trevors seemed disposed to take of her.

"She is so clever, too, this Lady Augusta!" thought he. "There is nothing that could be so useful to Judith as getting intimate with her."

And, as this thought entered his gay head, he rather abruptly asked his partner what she thought of Miss Maitland.

Had poor Lady Augusta felt less agitation in replying to this question, it is very possible that she would have shown more, or, at least, that she would have been less eager to dilate upon the subject thus opened, but which she now pursued with a degree of energetic warmth that perfectly succeeded in persuading Frederic, not only of her unbounded admiration, but also of her eager wish to cultivate the acquaintance. The idea delighted him, and he told her so.

Nothing could be further from Lady Augusta's wish, and intention, than to act a false part towards the happy but unoffending rival, now so strongly recommended to her friendship. But she felt that she had got into a scrape, and saw no better way of getting out of it, than submitting for the time to the sort of entanglement into which her own imprudence had thrown her.

She answered, therefore, very graciously; and thereupon a new and, as he fancied, a very brilliant idea suggested itself to him.

"How very kind you are!" said he. "I assure you, Lady Augusta, that I know no one whose friendship I should feel so delighted to obtain for her. And, by the by, as you are a personage of great fashion and influence, you might do her an immense kindness."

"As how?" returned Lady Augusta, quite determined to perform the kindness, let it be what it would.

"Oh! it is a very long story!" he replied; "a perfect romance, and not, I assure you, without a great deal of romantic interest. My sweet Judith, of whom you speak so kindly, had an aunt—or rather, to speak more correctly, *has* an aunt, who, *malheureusement*, naughty young lady, fell in love with her drawing-master, and married him. Of course she was obliged to elope, you know, and her fortune fell into her artistic husband's power, unsettled; the natural result of which is, that the run-away lady, who is now a widow, is left, together with her only son, in a state of worse than romantic distress, for I am sadly afraid that it is very real. However, the said son, who by the way is really one of the most magnificently handsome young fellows I ever saw in my life, has turned out to be a first-rate genius in the painting line, and all this long story is to end by my telling your ladyship that I want you to patronise him. I wish to heaven you would let him paint your portrait! It would make his fortune—I am quite certain of it!"

This long speech gave Lady Augusta time to recover herself. It gave time, too, for many thoughts, which made a sudden yet deep impression upon her.

Her heart throbbed with astonishment, and perhaps also with admiration, at the nobly independent spirit displayed by Frederic in this frank avowal of the humble station of the nearest relatives of his future wife. There was something in her eyes, poor young lady, perfectly extraordinary, and it might be perfectly sublime in this. And there would be sublimity, too, she felt there would be very great sublimity, in her conquering all the petty feelings that the sight of Judith inspired, and becoming the patroness of her poor relations.

She had no great leisure at that moment to examine into the prudence of the measure, as concerned herself; and she therefore scrupled not to reply to his proposal by at once acceding to his request, in the most frank and friendly manner possible.

"I must leave the whole arrangement to you, Mr. Dorking," she added; "but if you will settle with the young artist the day and hour of my coming to him, and will let me know where his painting-room is, I will take care to be punctual to the appointment."

"Is it possible that you really will have this extreme kindness?" exclaimed Frederic, touched by the friendly readiness with which she had complied with his request. "Depend upon it that you shall find every thing ready for you, at any day and hour that you will have the kindness to mention."

"Would it not be much more agreeable for me if I could be accompanied, on my first visit, by Miss Maitland?" returned Lady Augusta, in accordance with another sublime suggestion of her fertile imagination.

"She would be perfectly enchanted by being permitted to perform such an office!" replied Frederic; "for one great part of our romance consists in there having been a dying request addressed to Miss Maitland by her mother, to the effect that she would do all in her power to assist her imprudent, but, I believe, very amiable aunt."

"Then manage *this* for me also, Mr. Dorking," replied her ladyship.

"Shall we say to-morrow?" said Frederic. "No, not to-morrow!" he added, correcting himself, "for I am in hopes, Lady Augusta, that you will dance too late to-night to make it at all desirable that you should sit for your portrait to-morrow. It would not be fair to

the artist, nor would it be fair to you, fair as you are, to take your charming features at a disadvantage."

Poor Lady Augusta trembled like a leaf shaken by the wind. But she appeared to be looking at somebody that she saw passing in the distance, and presently resumed the conversation, by saying,

"It shall be Saturday, then, Mr. Dorking, if that day will suit both Miss Maitland and her cousin."

Was there any naughty little feeling mixed with this allusion to the near relationship between the artist and the future Mrs. Dorking? Let us hope not. But even if there were, the vexed condition of the speaker ought to be taken into the account.

Lady Augusta Trevors was by no means a very bad-hearted or a very ill-tempered girl. But, at that moment, she was suffering very severely.

If there were, indeed, any thing of the kind in her thoughts, the affianced Frederic did not perceive it, and, again very cordially thanking her, only waited till the present waltz was over before he hurried off to Judith told her all he had done, and the successful result of it, and hurried back again to the Lady Augusta, with the assurance of much gratitude, and a promise that Judith would be at No. — Mortimer Street, Cavendish Square, punctually at two o'clock on Saturday.

This appointment was, perhaps, the most remarkable occurrence that took place at this costly and very magnificent ball. And, at any rate, the two young ladies concerned in it had it more freshly in their heads, when they waked on the morrow, than any other adventure they had met with.

CHAPTER LVI.

NOTWITHSTANDING the late hour at which Judith went to bed, it was not at a late hour on the following morning that she appeared in Mortimer Street, to announce to Charles Worthington the very important news, that a sitter, of great fashion and high rank, intended to wait upon him on the morrow.

"To wait upon me to-morrow?" repeated Charles, looking half petrified. "And what am I to do with her?"

"Do with her?" repeated the happy Judith, laughing more gaily than she had done for many weeks,—"do with her, cousin Charles? Why you must paint her!"

"Impossible, Judith! This fine titled lady coming to have her portrait taken by me?

I am quite sure that you must be joking. It is so very improbable! Is it not, mamma?"

"Not if the lady is a friend of Judith's," replied Mrs. Worthington.

"I never saw her in my life till last night," said Judith, "so of the extent of her friendship for me I will give you leave to guess. No, no; she is Frederic Dorking's friend, not mine; but you must not like her the worse for that, Charles! I begin now to fancy that the reason why we have had no sitters before is, that Frederic had not been able to find any one that he thought sufficiently beautiful to inspire you properly. And, certainly, if beauty is what he has been seeking for, he has not waited in vain, for I really think this Lady Augusta is the most beautiful person I ever saw."

"How shall we take her, Judith?" cried Charles, evidently delighted by this description of his model. "Is she at all in your style, cousin?"

"In my style? Do you mean to ask if she is like me?" said Judith, laughing.

"I do not suppose she is like you," said Charles, colouring. "I did not mean to ask so stupid a question as that. The chances are not much in favour of any one's being like you. I only wanted to know if she was young and slight?"

"Young, certainly," replied Judith, "though I do not suppose she is such a baby chit as I am. And if by slight you mean exactly what a beautiful young woman ought to be, I say yes, though she is not such a thread-paper sort of thing as myself."

"But in what way shall I take her?" said he. "In what sort of dress, I mean, and in what sort of attitude?"

Judith reflected for a moment, and then said, "I should like you to make a full-length portrait of her; and I should like that she should be dressed in a very lovely fancy dress, either Greek or Persian. Or, if she *must* be taken as a woman of fashion, let it be in white satin, garnished with black lace."

"That would do, mamma, would it not?" said Charles, looking greatly delighted, and yet a little anxious too.

"I think you must see the lady before you can decide," replied Mrs. Worthington. "But as to its being full-length, Judith," she added, "it is quite impossible that Charles should propose that, because the expense would be so very much greater. As a young and unknown artist, it would be exceedingly

ungentlemanlike for him to propose a full-length."

"I will not propose it, *mamma mia*, because it would be presumptuous, artistically speaking," said Charles. "About its being gentlemanlike, *non so*; I suspect that I am more sonlike than gentlemanlike. Thou wantest money, mother mine! Then what care I how rude I be?"

Judith looked at him with a feeling which it would be difficult to express. Judith liked Mrs. Chilbert because she was ladylike (at least that was one reason), and she liked the dean because he was gentlemanlike, and she greatly wished to be ladylike herself. And yet, at that moment, she felt as if she could have knelt down before her cousin Charles merely because he repudiated the name of gentleman!

The morrow came, and it brought the Lady Augusta Trevors to Mortimer Street, precisely at two o'clock.

She looked round upon the group of three, by which she was received in the painting-room, with great interest, and she was greatly struck with the aspect of the young artist himself. It was not merely his remarkable personal advantages which produced this effect; in her estimation Frederic Dorking was a thousand times handsomer than Charles Worthington. But she thought, and perhaps she was not much mistaken, that he looked like a remarkable person. And then she looked at Judith; and then she looked at Charles again. They were not alike, no, not the least alike; and yet the Lady Augusta found an extraordinary sort of intellectual sympathy between them.

In the conversation which almost immediately followed her entrance, and which, of course, turned upon the style and costume of the portrait which had brought her there, she observed that every idea suggested by the one, however slightly hinted, was instantly comprehended to the fullest extent by the other. And she truly and greatly admired the evidently brilliant talents of both.

But she could not speculate very deeply upon this at present, though the theme was one of considerable interest; for their meeting was a matter of business, and as such it was treated in every word that passed between the young artist and his noble sitter.

"In what style, and of what size, would your ladyship wish the picture to be?" demanded Charles.

"I wish it to be a full-length, of the size of

life," replied Lady Augusta, who having come there for the express purpose of patronising the cousin of Miss Maitland, was quite determined (without thinking of a pun) not to do it by halves.

Charles bowed, but without speaking.

"And as to the costume?" said Lady Augusta. "Has your cousin ever taken *your* portrait, Miss Maitland?"

"Oh, no!" replied Judith, laughing. "I never have thought of having my portrait taken, but I think I will one of these days."

"And what is your notion about the important matter of costume?" said Lady Augusta.

"In the case of your ladyship, or in my own?" said Judith.

"This young lady is inclined to be familiar without loss of time," was the thought to which the matter of fact question of Judith gave rise in the breast of Lady Augusta; and yet the fair patrician had often boasted herself, in secret to her own soul, as "too high-minded to be proud." And in some sort she was right, too. Nevertheless, I have recorded her thought on this occasion very faithfully.

Her rejoinder, however, was as she intended it should be, exceedingly affable. "I am afraid," said she, "that I was so egotistical as to be thinking of myself. And I really should be very much obliged if you would let me hear your opinion."

"I have just been telling my cousin Charles," replied Judith, "that if you were not taken in a fancy costume, I should recommend white satin and black lace; and if the spirit of Vandyke would inspire him, I do not think he could have a better subject."

"How very clever! yet how very strange!" thought Lady Augusta, looking from the one cousin to the other, as if to consult them concerning the picture; but in truth examining them after her manner, and according to her lights, very philosophically, and rapidly coming to the satisfactory conclusion that artist blood must be in the veins of both.

But while she meditated, much to her own satisfaction, upon this curious phenomenon, Judith and Charles were muttering apart about one or two little preparatory arrangements in the painting-room, which must precede the sitting.

"Fancy a girl engaged to be married to Frederic Dorking calling a portrait-painter cousin Charles!" thought Lady Augusta.

"And fancy Mrs. Dorking submitting to it,

and actually receiving her, and taking her to Court! It is absolutely incredible! Perhaps this cousin Judith was originally intended for an artist herself; it is highly probable from her style of talking about it, and she really seems to have some very pretty notions. It is a pity her natural vocation should have been ever changed. It will not answer! *They must be miserable!*"

"It will take at least a day to get a canvass of the necessary size prepared and strained," said Charles, approaching the meditative lady, "and therefore I will beg your ladyship to return here on Wednesday at the same hour, when I will have every thing prepared; and perhaps, in the interval, you will have the kindness to decide upon the dress?"

"Oh! as to the dress, I have quite decided that already," replied Lady Augusta. "I assure you I mean to profit by your cousin's charming suggestion. It is quite evident to me that she is gifted with a thoroughly artist-like taste. Do you not think so yourself, Mr. Worthington?"

"I really do," replied the young man, colouring, and looking much pleased at what he considered as an amiable as well as deserved compliment to his cousin; "and nothing, I think, could prove this more," he added, "than her fixing upon Vandyke as the source from which she would wish me, upon the present occasion, to derive my inspiration, for it is exactly what the subject asks for."

This, too, was a very pretty compliment, though the aristocratic beauty to whom it was addressed did not comprehend it, for there was no mixture of plebeian artisticality in her blood.

However, upon the whole she was extremely well pleased by her visit, and pledged herself to be punctual to the day and hour that had been named for her next visit.

"But if I am punctual, my dear Miss Maitland, I hope you will be punctual too," said Lady Augusta, when taking leave of Judith. "Remember that I never intend to sit unless you will promise to sit with me."

Judith hesitated, and looked at her aunt and her cousin before she replied to this flattering but very unexpected request. She remembered that Charles had objected to her being present at Miss Elfreda's first sitting, and though the strictness of this regulation had been subsequently relaxed, and her presence permitted, she did not feel at all sure that the business of painting a portrait of

Lady Augusta Trevors might not go on better without her.

Judith and her cousin Charles had other faculties in common besides their love of art, although as yet her ladyship had not found it out; and the painter's cousin felt, that if the painter took it into his head only to look as if he were conscious of any of the exclusive style of airs and graces which she had herself found it so very easy to discover in the young lady who was so graciously disposed to patronise him, an answering look on her part might do mischief; for it appeared to her that Charles had neither the will nor the power of concealing his thoughts, by converting a smile into a look of solemnity.

In short, she was afraid of him, and her hesitation therefore ended by her saying that she feared she must not be indulged with the honour of being present at the sittings, for the artist would probably feel it to be an interruption.

But if Judith had some faculties for which her elegant new acquaintance did not give her credit, that elegant new acquaintance also possessed others, for which Judith in like manner gave her no credit at all. Among these was a quiet ladylike steadfastness of purpose, which often enabled her to have her own way in many cases where more vehement wilfulness might have failed. She did not leave Charles Worthington's painting-room that morning before she had contrived to make him say that he thought, from what she stated of her own habits and feelings, it would be more advantageous to the work that her ladyship should have Miss Maitland present to converse with her.

CHAPTER LVII.

THE results of that morning's consultation were various. The individual who, in the first instance, profited the most by it, was decidedly Charles. It was, in fact, with a very near approach to perfect happiness that he was left *tête-à-tête* with his mother, after Judith, at the interval of about half an hour, had followed Lady Augusta Trevors out of the house.

That same half-hour, too, had not passed without calling forth some very delightful feelings; for Judith, with all the sanguine hopefulness of her age and character, had declared, and really felt herself convinced, that if Charles could only succeed as well in painting the portrait of the beautiful Lady Augusta, as he had done in painting that of

their not beautiful aunt Elfreda, his fortune would be made.

To this prophecy Mrs. Worthington had listened with very great pleasure, and not without a good deal of faith; and when she and her darling son were left alone together—that darling son, who had so admirably cheered and supported her through all their complicated sorrows, difficulties, and embarrassments—when he stood smiling on her, the very personification of hope and joy, she could not, much as she had known grief, and heavily as at some points that grief still pressed upon her, she could not resist the exhilarating effects of his predictions that he should yet live to see her as happy as his own heart could wish.

“And if at last it should be my doing, *mamma mia!*” he exclaimed, “shall you not welcome it more joyously than any thing that could have come to you by inheritance?”

And what was the result of this morning’s work as far as related to Lady Augusta Trevors? That really elegant and really beautiful personage had been attended to Mr. Worthington’s painting-room by a very respectable and very stiff old waiting-gentlewoman, whose long residence in the family seemed to give her a right to belong to it; and Lady Augusta, upon this, as well as upon many other occasions, preferred her respectfully silent attendance to that of any of the useful class of elderly ladies whose chaperonship was always at her command.

But Lady Augusta never gossiped with this convenient personage, and scarcely a word now passed between them on their road towards Belgrave Square.

But the less Lady Augusta spoke, the more she thought of all she had seen and all she had heard that morning; and, by the time the carriage had very nearly reached her home, she felt so absolutely oppressed by the weight of her own thoughts, that she suddenly pulled the check-string, and ordered it to turn round, and drive to Mrs. Dorking’s, in Berkeley Square.

Very greatly to her satisfaction, she was admitted to the two pair of stairs boudoir of that luxurious lady, and found her, notwithstanding the inevitable confusion that the ball had left in the mansion, in calm and uninterrupted enjoyment of one of the very prettiest rooms in London. Mrs. Dorking was quite aware that it was so, and was rather glad of any excuse for receiving visit-

ors there, instead of in the drawing-room. But before the conversation which followed Lady Augusta’s admission there is repeated, it is proper to mention that her ladyship *presumed* that her secret sentiments for the son of her much-admired friend Mrs. Dorking were as completely unknown to her as she was quite sure they were to the young man himself; and she therefore believed that she might safely indulge herself in the closest possible cross-examination of the how, when, and where the unaccountable attachment had been formed, which was to convert the matchless Frederic Dorking into the cousin-german of an unknown portrait-painter.

Mrs. Dorking’s feelings and wishes respecting the young lady who thus unexpectedly appeared before her have been already sufficiently explained to render any comment upon her part of the ensuing dialogue unnecessary.

“How are you, my dearest Mrs. Dorking?” began her ladyship. “Your ball was positively divine; but I fear you must have been dreadfully fatigued! I longed to come and inquire for you yesterday, but I was particularly engaged elsewhere. Tell me, dear lady, how are you?”

“I am well in health, my dear young friend,” replied Mrs. Dorking, sighing. “Giving a ball is not a sort of thing that ever injures my health.”

“Injure your health? No; for you do it so admirably, that it seems as if you were born for it! But, nevertheless, I feared that you might be fatigued. And where do you think I have been this morning, my dear Mrs. Dorking?”

“Where? What an ample field for guessing lies before me! I am lost in it!”

“Then I must help you,” said Lady Augusta, with an odd sort of smile, which had perhaps a slight mixture of the sneer in it. “I went to sit for my portrait to a young artist, for whom your son seems particularly interested. His name, I think, is Worthington,—Mr. Charles Worthington.”

The face of Mrs. Dorking became crimson, and she uttered not a single syllable in reply.

“Of course, I need not tell you at whose request it was that I went there?” resumed Lady Augusta.

“Spare me! spare me!” ejaculated Mrs. Dorking, drawing out her pocket-handkerchief, and pressing it to her eyes.

“Forgive me, my dear, dear Mrs. Dorking!” cried Lady Augusta, affectionately

taking her hand. "Not for the universe would I willingly have said any thing to pain you! But how was it possible for me to guess?"

"No, no, no! you could not guess! Nobody can guess! But I sometimes think, my dear young friend, that it will kill me!"

"I know I ought to grieve at hearing you say this," said Lady Augusta, mournfully. "And I do grieve! indeed, indeed, I do, that you should be unhappy on any subject! But yet, if I guess rightly as to the cause of the sorrow you now express, I hardly know how I could wish you to feel otherwise."

"Surely, Lady Augusta, you could never for a moment have supposed that I should approve of the extraordinary connexion that my son proposes to form?"

"Nay, my dear Mrs. Dorking, till now I had no means of guessing this. I heard that Miss Maitland was a beauty, and an heiress, and heard nothing more."

"True, my dear! most true. There are many people, I have no doubt, who think I have every reason to be satisfied. But you are one of the last who *ought* to think so."

"I? I do not understand you," said Lady Augusta, colouring highly, and looking half angry and half anxious.

"Forgive me! and do not seek to understand me. If you knew all I have suffered, all the cruel, cruel disappointments, I cannot but think you would pity me! But it is idle to talk in this way. Only tell me what on earth it was which induced your ladyship to go to this man to have your portrait taken?"

"How can you ask me such a question, Mrs. Dorking? How is it possible that I could have gone there excepting at your son's request?"

"It is inconceivable!" cried Mrs. Dorking. "Might one not have imagined he would have felt some repugnance, some feeling a little approaching natural shame?"

"One might have thought so. And in the young woman also, Miss Maitland, I mean, one might have expected some feeling a little indicative of consciousness that her near relationship to this young man was a misfortune, or, at any rate, a disadvantage to her," said Lady Augusta. "But no; she positively gives one every reason to suppose that she is excessively proud of it!"

"Did she then talk to you, Lady Augusta, about these dreadful people? Did she actually begin on the subject, and ask your patronage

for them, the very hour and moment that she was introduced to you?" said Mrs. Dorking, in most unfeigned astonishment.

"No; but your son did," replied Lady Augusta.

"It is inconceivable! even in him, bewildered as he is in this most unfortunate passion! It is perfectly inconceivable that he should voluntarily have disclosed this disgraceful circumstance to you. As to the girl herself, far as she may be, oh! far as from pole to pole, from what I might have wished for my son, there was nothing at all disgraceful, or in any way objectionable, had I not once deluded myself with better hopes. Her father was a well-born gentleman, and a distinguished officer. Her fortune already exceeds, as I am told, two thousand a-year, and she has relations living in what we must allow to be perfectly the situation of gentlemen, from whom she expects considerably more. The girl too, herself, though to you I will confess that I detest her, is considered as vastly beautiful and vastly accomplished. How then could I dream that it was my duty to attempt any opposition to the declared intentions of my poor deluded Frederic? All the world knows that he is perfectly independent of us, having seven thousand a-year of his own. The only being that I ever cast my eyes upon, with a wish that she should be my daughter, was far away, and, in an evil hour, I consented to his earnest desire that I should call upon her. But need I tell you that I was totally ignorant, at that time, of the disgraceful connexions which have been now brought forward? In fact, the only person that I ever heard named in connexion with her was Mrs. Chilbert, the wife of the dean of Westhampton, and there was nothing in this that one could reasonably object to. For though you and I know perfectly well that no one, in any way professional, is ever very cordially admitted within certain circles, we nevertheless yield a sort of conventional respect both to the woolsack and the bench, which, of course, extends itself, in a degree, to what approximates to them; and, in fact, this Mrs. Chilbert herself, whenever she comes to town, is constantly met in really good society. So that I scarcely know how to blame myself for yielding to what was almost compulsion—but a compulsion certainly not disgraceful. Guess, then, what must have been my feelings when Frederic, in the lightest and most *nonchalante* manner possible, gave me to

understand that my intended daughter-in-law was nearly related to an artist! I will not dwell upon what I suffered. I think, sweet love, that you may easily imagine it. But from that hour to this Frederic has never made any further allusion to the hateful subject. Guess, then, my astonishment at now hearing that he has actually mentioned the disgraceful fact to you!"

Lady Augusta Trevors listened to the whole of this long speech with immovable and most earnest attention. Nor was it till some few minutes after Mrs. Dorking had ceased speaking that she attempted to reply to her. But during this interval her thoughts had been busy, very busy, carrying on, and bringing to decision, a most important question which she had set herself to solve.

If an eagle could be endowed with reason, and was commanded by Jupiter to decide whether the union of a bird of his own noble species with a hedge sparrow was likely to be productive of domestic happiness in his lofty nest, the said eagle could not more conscientiously have pronounced a negative, than did the Lady Augusta Trevors when she asked herself whether she believed a marriage between Frederic Dorking and the cousin-german of a professional portrait-painter could by any possibility be a happy one.

She had been greatly startled, on the night of the ball, at learning that such a relationship existed; and a strong movement of curiosity to know, and understand, a little more about it, had led her not only to consent that her own portrait should be taken by this cousin, but to invite Miss Maitland to accompany her.

"If I see them together," thought she, "I shall be a better judge of the sort of tone upon which the most elegant man in London will be expected to live with an artist."

But if she pitied the unhappy young man's infatuation before her visit to Mortimer Street, what were her feelings afterwards? Pity was magnified into perfect agony on his account, as she witnessed the unmitigated familiarity between the cousins.

"Fancy Frederic Dorking hearing his wife called to, as 'Judith,' by a man who gets his bread by painting portraits! Poor dear Frederic! my heart aches for him. He has not found out yet all the killing mortifications he will have to endure. But when it comes upon him, and come it must, I should not wonder if it were to drive him mad. Gra-

cious Heaven! Frederic Dorking dying in a mad-house!"

This was the agonizing train of thought, and this was the fearful image that suggested itself to the more than ever enamoured Lady Augusta as she drove homeward from Charles Worthington's painting-room; and then it was that, with a sort of desperate hope of doing *something*, she pulled the check-string with a very sudden jerk, and ordered her carriage to Berkeley Square.

That resolving to do *something* is always a very vague resolution, and certainly in the case of Lady Augusta it was particularly so; but yet there was a sensation like relief in it, and this relief was very pleasantly increased by the unexpectedly confidential tone of Mrs. Dorking's conversation.

It took the much-agitated Lady Augusta but one short moment of doubt before she decided that she too would be as confidential to her partial and dearly valued friend. And then, as it is easy to understand, matters went on at a rapid rate between them.

Mrs. Dorking touched delicately on her past hopes, and still more delicately hinted that nothing had prevented their realization but the cruel departure of Lady Augusta for the continent.

And then Lady Augusta, with very graceful frankness, avowed her preference to Frederic, but added that she doubted if it had ever been returned.

And then Mrs. Dorking, with all the authority of one who knows what she is talking about, assured her she was mistaken; and that she had left an aching and deeply disappointed heart with her poor Frederic. And then Lady Augusta wept, and wished that she had never left England at all.

And so they went on, till having passed two hours together in uninterrupted *tête-à-tête*, a series of experiments were imagined and decided upon between them, by which they thought it likely they should discover how far their poor deluded Frederic might still be within reach of having his eyes opened to the certain misery he was preparing for himself by being entrapped into such a marriage!

CHAPTER LVIII.

JUDITH, too, went home from Mortimer Street with a good deal to think about, as well as Lady Augusta; but, unlike her ladyship, her thoughts were not at all about herself, or her own feelings. Her destiny was settled,

and but for its incongruity with that of her most dear and near relatives, she would have been very reasonably happy in the prospect before her. But now she thought not of herself at all, she thought only of Charles.

She had been almost as much delighted as he was himself at the opening which Lady Augusta's sitting for him seemed to make, in the way of his profession. She had great faith in his talent, and, if possible, greater still in the simplicity and firmness of purpose with which he gave himself to it. Conscious of great talent in every way she thought he must be, and yet how utterly indifferent and unmindful did he appear of all, save that by which he hoped to support his mother!

His seemingly utter unconsciousness, too, of his own very remarkable personal advantages, and the rigorous economy which he observed in his dress, as well as in every thing else in which himself alone was concerned, altogether formed a character that it was impossible to contemplate without admiration, esteem, and love. And Judith felt all this for him, and, moreover, a feeling of joyousness and amusement in his society when listening to the lively and original sallies of his ever-teeming imagination and his buoyant spirits, greater, perhaps, than she had ever enjoyed any where.

But all this was tempered, sobered, and in some degree shorn of the bright enjoyment which it might have caused under other circumstances, by the constant anxiety she felt lest he should not obtain his proper footing in society.

There was so much appearance of frank good-humour in the tone of Frederic Dorking, whenever he chanced to meet Charles in Green Street, that Judith shut her eyes wilfully and pertinaciously against the obvious meaning of all the omissions in common civility, which his never having called upon him made so remarkable.

Miss Elfreda stood too much in awe of the whole Dorking family to venture any remark upon it; and feelings, both of delicacy and pride, effectually prevented Mrs. Worthington from alluding to it; and as to Charles, he positively thought so little of himself, individually, that he might almost be said to be unconscious of the fact that his cousin that was to be took no notice of him, excepting when they happened to meet by accident.

All he thought of, all he cared for, was the disappointment in the hopes he had formed

of finding employment by the interest of his cousin Judith's intended husband.

Judith, therefore, was the only one of the party who really suffered at all from this neglect; but she did suffer, and every day that passed made her suffer more, for every day that passed made her more alive to the high talent and noble qualities which deserved all attention and all kindness, and also to the very obvious fact, that by Frederic Dorking and his family none would be shown.

How long this state of things would have been permitted to go on before Judith made up her mind to remonstrate, if nothing had occurred to change its aspect, it is impossible to say. But this bold experiment of the portrait, on the part of Lady Augusta, was very likely to bring matters to a crisis.

Judith had fully expected that Frederic would at least have shown himself in the painting-room of her cousin, for the purpose of presenting the young artist to the lady whose patronage he had asked for and obtained; and great was her disappointment as well as her surprise at not seeing him there.

But even these feelings, strong as they were, seemed forgotten when she saw the sort of kindling eagerness in the countenance of Charles, as he looked at the beautiful features which were to form the subject of his first great effort to convert the profession he had so pertinaciously embraced to the provision of comforts for his mother. She felt assured of his success; and the joy, the delight which this idea gave her, not only made her forget that Frederic was absent, but made her forget, also, all the pretty little affected *minauderies* displayed by the fair sitter, though they had been only a few minutes before almost too much for her gravity.

And then it was that she and her cousin discussed together the attitude, the position of the hands, and so forth; and then they called each other freely and repeatedly by their christian names, which perhaps was what completed the conviction that had begun to take root in the noble young lady's mind, that she was positively bound by duty to prevent, by some means or other, so preposterous an alliance as that of Frederic Dorking with this inconceivably strange "*cousin Judith*."

But when she was fairly gone, the frolic joy of Charles put a stop to all artistic discussion whatever, and neither his mother nor Judith could resist the contagion, and their

gaiety banished every thing that was not pleasant from all their thoughts.

Judith, however, at length so far recovered her discretion, as to remember that she had promised her aunt Elfreda to return in time to take a drive with her in the park.

"And do you take a drive, too, aunt Penelope!" said Judith, coaxingly. "I am quite sure it will do you good, and tranquillize your nerves after all the riot your wild son has been making. Come with me, will you?"

"Not if I am to keep the engagement you have made for me this evening, Judith. I cannot do both," replied Mrs. Worthington.

"Oh, most true! This is dear Mr. Carey's evening; and I would not let you miss it for the world. His parties are worth all the rest that I go to in London. Adieu, then, till to-night. The carriage shall come for you at the usual time."

These weekly parties at the house of Mr. Carey were very decidedly, in Judith's estimation, the most agreeable in London; which preference might in some degree have been accorded to them, because it was there only that as yet she had ever had the pleasure of being accompanied by her aunt Worthington. Charles had not gone out with them much, for Miss Elfreda trembled at the idea of compromising her own hardly-worked for position, by hazarding the introduction of the young unknown, who upon inquiry might be discovered to have had a poor man for his father; and it was only by delicate degrees that Judith had contrived to have him occasionally taken where she thought it might be agreeable to him to go.

But of late this part of his history had begun to assume a new aspect. The Careys had found out that he could not only accompany his cousin in a style greatly superior to her own, but that he could sing himself, and in a manner that only needed to be heard once in order to make it clamorously sought for again. So that for the last week or two he had been quite as much in society as he wished to be,—for he was too gaily light-hearted to be vain, and felt not the slightest pleasure in displaying his talents for the amusement of strangers,—such a degree of intimacy being necessary for his enjoyment as cannot be easily found or formed in the large parties of the full London season.

But the house of Mr. Carey was an exception to all this; for though large parties occasionally assembled there, they for the most part consisted of persons who contributed to

the pleasure of society as much as they enjoyed it, and amongst them Charles soon found himself at home.

To Mrs. Worthington, too, there was real pleasure in going there; for both Mr. Carey and his very charming wife had not only known and loved her in her younger days, but they were among the very few who really knew her lamented husband. Imprudent as the act had been by which she became his wife, the Carey family were well disposed to pardon her, for they had known him as none other of her acquaintance had done. The freemasonry of talent had been between them.

Such being the terms on which the Worthingtons were received there, it may easily be guessed why it was that Judith felt considerably more pleasure in going to Mr. Carey's parties than to any other. And that the feeling which caused this preference was a strong one was proved by the fact that it still continued, though (more than once invited and more than once engaged to go there) Frederic Dorking had never yet made his appearance in Mr. Carey's little drawing-room in Davies Street.

Judith might have been more vexed at this than she was, had she not constructed a theory of her own on the subject. This ingenious theory taught her to believe that Frederic would have enjoyed the little drawing-room exceedingly, had not his vain and very stupid mother prevented his making himself acquainted with it.

This theory she had very ingeniously invented for her own particular consolation some weeks ago, but on this evening it seemed to fail her. She was, for the first time perhaps, really angry with Frederic. She felt, for the first time also, that he had failed in civility as well as in affection, in not being present when, as he well knew, she had engaged to meet Lady Augusta Trevors in Mortimer Street.

Was it that he wanted courage to display himself before her in the light of a future near relation to an artist?

"Oh! if I thought that!" she mentally exclaimed, "if for a moment I could believe it, what a dismal wreck would all my best affections be!" And a few such thoughts did certainly in the course of that brilliant evening flash through her mind, with the sort of angry light which, while it lasts, shows objects only too distinctly.

But no such painful thoughts could detain

her long from the enjoyment of moments made up of every thing best calculated to occupy and delight her. The new-born hopes and happiness of Charles had inspired him with a degree of courageous brilliancy, which did not shrink, as heretofore, from the notice and admiration he excited. Mr. Carey asked him, *à-propos* of a question which had been started upon the present state of taste and feeling for poetry in Italy, whether he thought that Dante still held his high supremacy among them?

"Indeed I do!" replied Charles.

"Yet, what proofs do they give of it?" said Mr. Carey. "All that I have read, or heard of late, has rather led me to suspect that they have amused themselves more by getting up an *Inferno* upon earth, than either in soaring or diving in the spirit of the mighty Tuscan."

"You would not say that," said Charles, "could you have seen what I have seen—could you have heard what I have heard, Mr. Carey! I have more than once been present in a theatre in Italy when their great actor, Modena, has recited favourite passages of Dante to them. And could you have watched the people then—could you have seen, as I have done, the dark yet glowing language of the eager eyes, the listening stillness of the speaking features, and felt how awful was the death-like silence of a crowd while listening to such words as were then breathed into their souls, you would not speak of them as of men that had been. *Non è spento. Non è spento.*"

There was a little approach to the listening stillness he had been describing during this burst, and even for a few seconds afterwards; for Charles was in earnest, and earnestness almost always claims attention.

Mr. Carey, however, knew that this must not last too long, or that the eager boy would have reason to think that he had frightened them all by his vehemence. "Reciting Dante?" said Mr. Carey. "How was this managed, Worthington? Did the performer come forward dressed like a private gentleman, and mouth out the *Commedia*?"

"No, no; he was in character," replied Charles.

"In character, my dear fellow! In what character?"

The animal spirits of Charles were in a state of unusual excitement. He was feeling perfectly happy, and his mother was looking happy too,—looking as he had not seen her

for years. This must be his excuse for the frolic that followed. Instead of replying to Mr. Carey, he addressed himself to that gentleman's clever and very animated young daughter; another whisper was addressed to Judith, and then the trio left the room together.

Their absence was not long; and when they returned most of the party marvelled how it could have been so short, for the two young ladies, who returned first, and who contrived, after whispering a word or two to Mr. Carey, to clear a small space at the end of the room upon which the door opened, were presently followed by a figure which those unpractised in such vagaries marvelled to see so suddenly *costumé*.

In a word, Charles entered, and by the help of the well-known head-dress, (admirably arranged by the two girls, who had not scrupled to ransack a box of artificial flowers for the needful leaves,) and by the help, also, of such draperies as the winter wardrobes of the family easily furnished, appeared before the company in the likeness of that immortal figure, which is pretty well familiar to all the world, and, with a wonderfully clever imitation of Modena's voice and manner, recited the first solemnly mysterious lines of the *Inferno*.

The effect produced was considerably greater than the young mimic had anticipated or intended. There were three or four persons present who had heard Modena speak these lines, and their testimony to the excellence of the imitation was unanimous.

But Mr. Carey would not let him cease there, and the imploring cries of "Go on! Go on!" which seconded his entreaties, tempted Charles to indulge both himself and them by reciting several of those well-known passages which are almost as familiar to an educated audience in England as in Italy.

The countenance, the majestic stature, the graceful form, and, above all, the firm yet flexible, the sonorous yet harmonious voice of Charles, altogether gave a power and a charm to this performance that was irresistible.

"And this is the man," thought Judith, as she looked proudly at her cousin, "this is the man they are ashamed of! But no. Perhaps if they saw him thus,—perhaps if they hit upon the notable discovery that he had that in him which might rouse even the apathy of fashion into something like intellectual excitement,—perhaps then they might condescend to notice him! But rather than

this should be—rather than he should be made use of, as a tool for their amusement, I would doom him to the oblivion of a hermit's cell, and his mother and I would share it with him."

Unhappy Judith! Alas! how that young heart was wrung, notwithstanding the manifold blessings that Providence had showered upon her! And now, in addition to all the rest, she had to endure the pang of remorse.

Notwithstanding all the blame which could not but attach to Frederic Dorking for his conduct towards Charles, (however much his mother's influence might have occasioned it,) notwithstanding this, she did not doubt his love towards herself; nor did she, nor could she, for a moment forget that she had pledged her faith to him. And yet, unhappy girl! she felt, through every fibre of her frame, that she was not made for Frederic, nor Frederic for her.

A feeling of terror not to be described seized upon her as she became conscious of the tendency of her own thoughts when they dictated the indignant words above cited. *She* share the hermitage of Charles Worthington! *She*! an affianced wife, and affianced to a man who loved her tenderly, and had proved his love!

If any of the excited and greatly delighted company had found leisure to look at her at that moment, they would have seen her as pale as death; and well might she look pale, for a more miserable creature than Judith was at that moment could not easily have been found,—great part of that misery arising from the dreadful persuasion that she was very wicked.

The love of Frederic Dorking had been returned with all the glowing affection and gratitude of a very young creature, feeling, or fancying, that the obligation conferred was greater than could be repaid.

Nothing could well have been more modestly humble than Judith's estimate of herself and her own consequence, when she first found herself, an unknown little stranger, in her new country; and sensitive and impressionable as she was in a very high degree, the delightful soothing which the flattering kindness of Mrs. Chilbert, and the still more flattering devotion of Frederick Dorking, brought to her loving but then solitary heart was irresistible.

Judith had some little vanity, too, as who has not? And Mrs. Chilbert had made her very clearly comprehend that she had some

reason to be vain of a preference, which could have been received with indifference by no one. And the beautiful ardent child repaid it with her whole heart. At least she thought it was her whole heart, and she had told him so, with the same sincerity that she told it to Mrs. Chilbert and to herself.

But, alas! most fearfully rapid had been of late the developement of faculties, which made her doubt whether indeed she loved him with her whole heart.

Was it not an infidelity, was it not a sin, to be so keenly sensible of the superiority of her cousin Charles? Where was the casuist who was to answer her? Or, rather, where was the human being to whom she could apply for counsel and judgment as to what she ought to do? Yet, even in the painful moments when she was most near to confessing to herself that she loved Charles better than Frederic, even then she never for an instant fancied that Charles loved her. And never, in truth, had he given her the slightest reason to suspect it. Charles was seven long years older than Judith, and his character was much beyond his age in firmness. He had, from the first day of their acquaintance, looked upon Judith as a thing forbid; and his conduct, and his feelings too, had been exactly what they ought to have been under the circumstances.

What he thought of her beauty as an artist, of her talents as an amateur, or of her feelings and conduct as a philosopher, is another affair.

CHAPTER LIX.

NOTHING could exceed the punctuality with which the Lady Augusta Trevors kept her appointment with the young artist, and Judith was equally punctual in meeting her; for not only had she promised to be so, but her cousin Charles had told her, very honestly, that he thought she might be useful to him.

Her ladyship, at her first sitting, did not come in the covenanted *white satin and black lace*, for Charles had told her that it was not necessary. The chief business of this first sitting was the final arrangement of the attitude, and an outline sketch in chalk, to determine the place of the features upon the canvass.

"Shall I be too troublesome," said Charles, "if I request your ladyship to give me a daily sitting? When I am interested in a work, I get on with it very rapidly, and any un-

necessary interval would, I think, be injurious."

"I flatter myself, Mr. Worthington, that nothing will occur to prevent my coming to you daily," she replied. "Must I be dressed to-morrow?"

"I should wish to see you to-morrow precisely as you would desire the finished portrait to appear," said he.

"Very well, sir; it shall be so," she replied. "And now, then, I may go?" she added.

Charles made a ceremonious bow, in token of her having permission to depart, and then prepared to open the door for her. "But not," she exclaimed, in an accent of pretty playfulness, "not till I have your cousin's promise to meet me here daily. Daily, my dear! Remember, daily! I know that I could not sit patiently for five minutes without you."

Charles scarcely knew what to make of the pertinacity with which this condition was enforced; nor did he feel quite sure that Judith might approve it. He therefore replied, rather stiffly, "Your ladyship's influence on Miss Maitland is, I doubt not, very powerful, and I must beg you to settle the arrangement with her. All I can say on the subject is, that her presence will be no impediment to my work."

"And that assurance will be enough for my kind friend, will it not?" said Lady Augusta, very coaxingly.

"If it is thought that I can really be of any use in the business, I will certainly be punctual in attendance," replied Judith, gravely.

"But you are of use! You will be of the greatest use!" exclaimed the beautiful Lady Augusta, arranging her bonnet at the glass; "for the fact is, I shall not feel happy without you."

Judith forced a smile, and bowed her acquiescence; whereupon her ladyship very condescendingly kissed the tips of her fingers at her, and departed.

I have no time left to enter very much into detail, but there was a doubting sort of smile exchanged among the trio that were left in occupation of Charles's painting-room. They all three doubted the sincerity of the beautiful young lady who had left them. Judith only felt sure that she was very silly, Charles that she was very affected, and Mrs. Worthington that she was any thing but true. In short, they were all aware that they had no single feeling in common with her.

"She is not one of us," said Charles; "but I shall not make the worse portrait of her for that. You shall see."

The work, indeed, on which they all seemed to think so much depended, went on admirably. At the conclusion of the third sitting the likeness, both of feature and attitude, became so striking, that Charles himself smiled as he looked at it; his mother made him a low bow, for she had been requested by her son not to leave the room till she had given her opinion upon the position of the delicate white hand; and Judith, too much elated to persevere in the reserve she had assumed, said, with considerable animation, "I think it would be very desirable, Lady Augusta, that some of your family or friends should see the picture before any thing like finishing is set about. If they think the resemblance as perfect as I do, Mr. Worthington must be requested to make no alteration whatever."

"Thank you a thousand times for that suggestion, my charming Miss Maitland!" exclaimed Lady Augusta, very joyously. "It is exactly what I was wishing for myself. But I would not venture to make the proposal till Mr. Worthington himself expressed a wish that it should be seen."

"I shall be much pleased to hear the judgment of your family, or of any intimate friend upon the likeness, before I go any farther," said Charles.

"Exactly what Miss Maitland suggested," said Lady Augusta. "What perfectly kindred spirits yours are!" she added, looking from one to the other, with an affected air of sentimental interest.

Charles coloured slightly, and bowed as if he had received a compliment; but poor Judith became as red as scarlet. It was to her a compliment that could not be listened to with indifference. Lady Augusta gave her one glance of hawk-like keenness, and to her waiting-gentleman the signal for departure; and then muttering a few words to Charles, signifying that she should come to him with some friends on the morrow, she took her leave.

Charles seemed to have forgotten her the moment she had left the room, but gazed with a great deal more interest at the admirable *ébauche* of her which he had thrown upon his convass, than she was ever likely to inspire in him herself.

Not so the two ladies. They had paid much more attention to her, taking her soul

and body together, than he had, for he had really forgotten that she had any thing save a very handsome person in her composition. The soul did not seem to have been conspicuous.

"How do you like her, aunt Worthington?" said Judith in a half-whisper, as if unwilling to disturb the artistic meditations of Charles.

"Judith! I cannot imagine why it is that I *dislike* her so much," replied Mrs. Worthington.

"I think I could tell you, aunt Penelope," said Judith, in a still lower whisper. "There is no truth in her,—and you feel it!"

Meanwhile this harshly-judged lady repaired immediately to Berkeley Square, and very completely proved that Judith had taken but a one-sided view of her character, by the very near approach to frankness with which she addressed her friend and ally, Mrs. Dorking.

"My dear, dear friend!" she began. "I am so glad to find you! My heart is bursting, my dearest Mrs. Dorking! For myself, I know it is my duty to give up all hope,—I have none! Alas! no, I have none! But not for that reason can I be indifferent to the destiny of your son,—to the destiny of the only man that I ever did or ever can love. And that destiny, Mrs. Dorking, unless some influence interferes to prevent it, that destiny will be terrible!"

"My dearest Lady Augusta! My sweet lovely girl!—oh! let me say, my beloved child! Do not, I beseech you, for pity's sake, for that gentle pity's sake which must be a part of your sweet loving nature,—do not tell me to despair! My dearest love! my life hangs on the issue of this horrible affair. What is it you will tell me of? Some new proof of my unhappy son's besotted madness?"

"No, my beloved, my dearest friend, no!" replied the agitated Lady Augusta. "It is not *that*. I have not seen your son. I half hinted to him last night, that I expected to see him among his friends in Mortimer Street. He coloured, but said nothing, and I have never seen him there. No, no, it is not *that*. What makes my heart ache now is the deep conviction which I feel that the girl loves him not. Mrs. Dorking! when a woman loves, trust me, her eyes are marvellously opened to the perception of the same feeling in another. That girl, that *Judith* does *not* love your son,—she loves her cousin. She

loves the handsome low-born youth who is now struggling to maintain himself by his labour, but who will end by being maintained by her, whether she be his wife or not."

Mrs. Dorking was rather more than willing to believe any thing which might tend to separate her son from a girl whose alliance could, in her opinion, bring nothing with it to counterbalance the evil of her low connexions, and who, moreover, had mortally offended her by displaying a will restive and disobedient to her own.

Yet, nevertheless, she did not, she could not, credit the statement of the enamoured Lady Augusta. She really and truly did not believe it possible that any female heart that ever beat (unless insanity had something to do with it) could prefer a vulgar painter, labouring in a garret, (these were the terms her meditating soul suggested to her,) to such a being as Frederic Dorking!

But this conviction by no means led her to think that the duty of saving this son, if possible, from such an alliance was the less imperative upon her; and if this new fancy of Lady Augusta could in any way assist in achieving this, it was not to be rejected merely because it was improbable.

She therefore uttered no discouraging sound to check her young friend's confidence, but, fixing her eyes upon her with an expression of more interest and hope than she really felt, only pronounced the words "Go on!"

And her ladyship did go on, so ably stating facts, or at least inferences, very skilfully drawn from all she had seen and all she had heard, coloured a little, of course, by the tincture of her own wishes, but on the whole giving an air so much like the fidelity of truth to her narrative, that Mrs. Dorking was staggered in her belief of its impossibility.

"If you are right, my sweet girl,—if this obscure Indian girl indeed prefers a relative of her own class and rank to the infatuated young man who turned aside from his own to notice her,—if this be true, the task before me is then easy, for I shall be assisted in it by every feeling and every duty that ought to influence the actions of a woman in my position."

"That your duty is plain, my dearest friend, there certainly can be no doubt," was the reply; "and nothing, I now think, can prevent the task being easy, but some blundering in our manner of performing it. I

have not told you yet, dear Mrs. Dorking, but I see no reason why I should conceal it from you,—I have not told you yet, that, when I first met Frederic after my return to London, I thought he greeted me with considerable agitation in his manner; and at the ball, your charming ball I mean, he took, I thought, almost as much notice of me as he did of her. And I am quite sure that he thought I was not altered for the worse in my appearance. I tell you this, that you may not think I am madly listening to the dictates of my own heart without paying any attention to his. I lost him once, I know I did, by fancying there was more indifference on his part than on my own; but I have suffered too much to permit my committing the same folly again."

"Thank Heaven for that!" replied Mrs. Dorking, with great sincerity, much comforted and encouraged by finding that, whatever difficulties her favourite project might have to encounter on the part of her son, there would be none to fear on that of the lady. And then she gave a description, which was not altogether untrue though very greatly exaggerated, of the disappointment suffered by Frederic upon discovering that he had deceived himself when he believed that he had made some progress in her favour, adding, "Had you never made your cruel flight to Paris, my lovely child, my heart would never have been tortured as it has been by what followed it!"

Having thus mutually established the most entire confidence between themselves, the two ladies proceeded to the arrangement of many things upon which they founded their hopes of being able to convince the poor deluded Frederic, that Judith Maitland was not the woman best calculated to make him happy as a wife.

And certainly it was very possible that they were right. At any rate they were very sincerely in earnest; and, before they parted, it was determined between them that so very brilliant and overpowering a party of the highest rank and fashion should visit poor Charles Worthington's painting-room on the morrow, for the ostensible purpose of passing judgment upon Lady Augusta's portrait, as might place in a sufficiently obvious point of view the tremendous chasm which divided people of fashion from people of talent,—Mrs. Dorking undertaking, on her side, that both her son and herself would make a part of the distinguished company who

were thus to honour the abode of the poor painter.

CHAPTER LX.

CERTAINLY it was not without surprise, and certainly it was not without vexation, that Frederic Dorking listened to his mother's proposal of meeting Lady Augusta Trevors at "the painter's," in order to give their opinion of the portrait for which, at his request, she was sitting, before it proceeded any further.

Had the painter been any other than Charles Worthington, the cousin-german of his affianced bride, he would certainly have seen nothing either extraordinary or disagreeable in the proposal; but having never forgotten the terrible aspect of his mother when he first made her acquainted with the disagreeable fact of this relationship, it now appeared to him to be both.

Frederic Dorking was perfectly well aware of his own complete independence; and it was this which had given him the courage, as well as the power, of persevering in his purpose of marrying his beautiful Judith after he had himself been made acquainted with the station and the proximity of these unexpected relations. But the discovery, though it had not cured his passion for Judith, was very far from being agreeable to him.

As far as wishing to be very liberal in assisting them, Judith herself, could she have read his very inmost heart, must have been satisfied; but she had never yet judged him quite as severely as she might have done as to his inclination—nay, more, his firm determination—to have as little to do with them in the way of personal intercourse as possible.

Nevertheless, he really admired Charles, and felt that, whenever accident threw them together, he should never feel any repugnance to treating him with familiarity and kindness; nay, he contemplated doing great things for him in the way of patronage, and he even thought it possible that if, in future years, the young man should achieve greatness, (for he knew such things had happened,) he might be induced to go still further.

But, for the present, he really and truly thought it was his duty to "hold off," for so only could he hope to maintain any thing like harmony with his own family.

This plan had hitherto seemed to answer very well, for Judith had never hinted to him

any feeling approaching to disapproval of his conduct. His father he believed to be still totally ignorant that any such obnoxious people as the Worthingtons existed; and, as to his mother, he persuaded himself that she was satisfied with the degree of discretion he had displayed, and had come to the wise determination of never again alluding to the subject.

But all this well-looking and convenient fabric was completely overthrown by his mother's unexpected proposal of going herself, and making him go also, to Mortimer Street.

It positively occurred to him, for one moment, that it was possible she might have forgotten, in the fervour of her renewed intimacy with her charming young friend Lady Augusta, that the artist who was painting her picture was the same individual whose threatened connexion with herself had once appeared to affect her very much like a thunderbolt.

But this idea was effectually removed upon her saying, with considerable bitterness of tone, "Of course, Frederic, *you* can have no objection to this visit, whatever I may feel."

In fact, to object to it was, he felt, impossible, and he promised that he would be ready to attend her.

On reaching the residence of Lady Augusta, who had requested Mrs. Dorking to let her have a place in her carriage, they found the equipages of her father, the Earl of Somerstown, and two others belonging to dear friends of her ladyship, in waiting.

Mrs. Dorking did not get out, but Frederic ran up stairs to announce the arrival of his mother, and to escort the young lady to the carriage.

Much to his surprise, and almost to his dismay, he found Lord Somerstown himself, and his son and heir Lord Worley, in waiting to accompany them.

Now the only mental quality for which the Earl of Somerstown had ever been distinguished was pride—hard, stiff, stubborn, stupid, unbending pride; whereas his son and heir was as notoriously distinguished for excess of puppyism, holding himself to be the mirror of fashion, and one by which every man must dress himself, or fail in obtaining anything like a favourable place in fashionable society. He was, moreover, as insolent as vain. And if the unfortunate Frederic had been asked to name the two individuals before whom he would the most reluctantly have met his affianced wife in the presence of her

artist cousin, he could not have failed to name Lord Somerstown and Lord Worley.

Moreover, the drawing-room into which he was ushered contained four exquisitely elegant ladies of fashion, with whom he had the honour and happiness of being acquainted, besides the beautiful Lady Augusta herself.

And at that moment she certainly was "beautiful exceedingly," for, with coquetry not very difficult to understand, she had on this occasion assumed, for the first time, the very beautiful and particularly becoming dress in which it had been arranged that she should be painted.

Judith had been well inspired when she alluded to the style of Vandyke as the model upon which a portrait of Lady Augusta Trevors should be taken. It would be difficult to imagine a face and figure more admirably calculated to suit it. Tall, and very elegantly formed; fair, yet not so fair as to deprive her of the advantage of rather dark hair; eyes large and long; nose straight; mouth small; and ringlets of the most finished corkscrew style, proclaimed her a Vandyke ready-made by nature expressly to be transferred to canvass. And when to this is added a very little foot, and a very delicate hand, it may easily be imagined that a perfectly well-arranged dress of white satin and black lace would complete altogether a very lovely picture.

But Frederic Dorking was too much annoyed by the consciousness of all that was to follow, to have any feelings very wide awake except those of mortification. His heart sunk, poor young man, at the idea of what was to follow! However, he was himself too essentially a man of fashion to be quite thrown out. Having paid his compliments to his dear elegant friends—and all the persons there *were* his dear elegant friends—he offered his arm, looking very handsome, too, as he did so, to the Lady Augusta, and led her immediately to his mother's carriage.

Upon this occasion it was a carriage *à quatre*, and Frederic had the gratification of sitting opposite to the beautiful Vandyke. And she really was so beautiful, that for a moment he actually forgot all his troubles, and told her so.

The feet of the two ladies came in contact, and the white satin shoe of Lady Augusta was pressed upon by the black satin boot of Mrs. Dorking.

To Frederic's compliment her ladyship returned a look, in which a smile and frown seemed mingled; and she blushed, too, for

she, at least, was very much in earnest,—she blushed beautifully. And the dress, and the blush, and the smile, and the frown altogether produced their effect, for he certainly felt very perfectly aware that she was exceedingly lovely.

The carriage of Mrs. Dorking was in the van; and when that stopped at No.—, Mortimer Street, the three carriages which were following it stopped too. And then Frederic in one instant was converted from a well-pleased man of fashion, admiring a particularly beautiful woman of fashion, sitting face to face with him, and seeming to have no great objection to the being so admired,—in one single instant he was changed from this into an ill-at-ease *promesso sposo*, who was bound to forget all the beauty in the world except that of the very dear little creature who at that moment he felt ashamed should be seen by any body but himself.

In short, he was quite aware that, somehow or other, he had got into a very particularly awkward predicament, and gladly would he have run away from it had it been possible. But it was not possible; and he felt himself doomed to usher, not only Lady Augusta Trevors and his mother, but the half-dozen other fine folks who followed them, up two pair of stairs to the very convenient painting-room of Charles Worthington!

The party found the young artist in his artist's dress, which was a brown holland blouse, with a black leather belt round his waist. Poor Judith, of course, was there also, for in fact she was there upon compulsion; and her aunt Worthington was there of course also, for Judith could not have been there alone.

If the very particular awkwardness of the position in which Mr. Frederic Dorking now found himself be not evident, the Lady Augusta Trevors had meditated, planned, and plotted in vain. At any rate it was evident to himself; and any thing more unlike what it ought to have been than his manner of paying his compliments to Judith, to her cousin, and to her aunt, cannot well be imagined.

Judith, with all her own individual feelings for the moment forgotten, seemed only conscious that the present now was a period of great importance to the professional advancement of her cousin Charles. She did not happen to know by sight any of the magnates there assembled, either male or female, save the two ladies who were engaged in playing

such strange tricks with her destiny, and the greatly discomposed gentleman to whom her faith was pledged. But she was an acute and quick-eyed little personage, and very speedily became aware, even before any astounding titles had reached her ear, that they were of the rank and station likely to have influence.

Perhaps there was not one of the set (her lover excepted) who, if they could have read the very inmost page of her heart, would not have classed her as a thoroughly low-minded profit-seeking young creature, whom accident had thrown among them, but whose proper place in creation was decidedly among the productive classes, whose destiny it is to minister to the wants and the wishes of their superiors.

And it might, in truth, have required a more searching and more speculative eye than is usually bestowed upon us, purblind mortals as we are, to have discerned all the nobleness that was hid under the innocent young look and quiet exterior of Judith. That she was beautiful, was a point already agreed upon and settled among all the *lorgnettes* of London for the season; but the retiring unpresuming air with which she now seemed to class herself much more distinctly as Charles Worthington's born cousin than as Frederic Dorking's future wife, produced an effect upon the whole party, concerning which she was both unconscious and indifferent.

Lady Augusta looked, and felt, as if already in possession of all that she most wished for on earth. Radiant in conscious beauty, and more radiant still, if possible, in conscious elegance, in conscious fashion, could she look at Judith's business-like anxiety concerning the position and management of light upon her picture with any of the soul-subduing terrors of jealousy?

It was absolutely impossible; absolutely out of the question! She watched the uncomfortable countenance of Frederic; she saw his eye rest for a moment upon the tranquilly-moving and perfectly self-possessed Judith, and then saw it turn with a look of feverish annoyance on his mother, and then felt that it rested upon herself.

"Will he ever bring himself to marry her after this?" was the thrilling question that she asked herself. And the answer that her heart, and her judgment, and her experience whispered to her in return, was of a nature to bring a still lovelier bloom to her cheeks, and a sweeter smile to her lips.

It was indeed a moment of triumph. She saw herself in the large *cheval* mirror as beautiful as an angel, and what she felt perhaps, at that moment, to be more important still, she saw herself the very perfection of elegance and dignity of aspect; and she saw also that Frederic Dorking was fixedly looking at her.

From this contemplation she turned, almost unconsciously, a furtive glance upon Judith; and though she had before certainly thought her exceedingly lovely, she now became convinced that whatever beauty she had was the beauty of a *grisette*, and that she was no more fit to be the wife of the exquisitely elegant Frederic Dorking, than she herself was to be the wife of Charles Worthington, the painter.

The eyes of the whole company were of course speedily directed towards the portrait, and the judgment passed upon the resemblance already obtained was perfectly uniform, and equally satisfactory to the artist and his model.

But neither Lady Augusta nor her devoted friend Mrs. Dorking had any intention that the scene should end here.

It was arranged that Lady Augusta was to be left to give the artist a sitting; but, by a multitude of clever little devices, she contrived that her fine friends should not leave her immediately. She had various consultations to hold, various opinions to ask, respecting the position of a hand, or the position of a foot, or whether a ring should be worn, or not worn, and whether a glove should be held, or not held.

In short, there was no great difficulty in prolonging a scene that was full of gratification in a thousand ways to her, and, as she hoped, full of mortification, and of fatal mischief too, to the unconscious girl whom she hoped to crush, to rival, and to supplant.

She saw, indeed, that the man she so passionately loved was suffering acutely; but she could not afford to spare him that; and as she glanced at his flushed cheek and embarrassed eye she satisfied her heart, and her conscience too, by the reflection, that for every second of mortification she was inflicting upon him now, she might spare him a long life of mortification ten thousand times deeper still.

Meanwhile, the deeply-interested Mrs. Dorking was not idle. She had cleverly taken care to make Judith understand, and Frederic also, that she had been much offended by the

conduct of Miss Maitland at her pic-nic breakfast on the Thames, and, whether reasonably or not, it mattered little, this sufficed to explain her altered manner to her.

Judith had borne this altered manner very patiently, for which, indeed, but little credit was due to her; for it had, in truth, proved to her a source of inexpressible relief, the truthfulness of her character having often made her suitable reception of Mrs. Dorking's flattering cajoleries, during the former part of their acquaintance, inexpressibly painful to her.

On the present occasion, however, nothing that related merely to herself was either felt or cared for. The circumstance of her appearing to the eyes of Frederic, his mother, and the fine train of friends by whom they were accompanied, in the subordinate station of an artist's near relative instead of that of a beauty and an heiress, was as completely unthought of by her at that moment, as the occupation at the time-being of the Grand Turk.

She believed that she herself was going to be married; she believed that her own destiny, in this respect, was fixed and certain; and this being so, she knew that she could not reasonably hope to share her fortune with her dearly-beloved aunt Penelope. No thought of how well she might have liked to share it with her son made any part of her meditations. The very strongest and most earnest efforts of her mind were constantly in action to save her from the approach of any such thoughts. Nor were these efforts vain. She really thought of no such thing. She thought of the immense importance that the success of her cousin Charles, as an artist, would be, both to himself and his mother, and all her care, all her attention,—in truth, her whole heart and soul, were, during these very important moments, fixed on that, and that alone.

And while these important moments lasted, while she perceived every eye fixed in critical scrutiny on the canvass, and heard every voice declare that the work upon it, as far as it was advanced, was admirable,—as long as this lasted, it would have been scarcely in the power of any one present to have diverted her attention from the subject.

But when this was over, when the conclave round the canvass broke up, which was not the case till Lord Somerstown, in a paroxysm of satisfaction at seeing his beautiful daughter so admirably portrayed, had

formally announced to Mr. Worthington that he too should choose to have his portrait taken at full length, and as a pendant to that of his daughter,—when this was settled, and the attention of the party was turned from the portrait to the beautiful original, then, indeed, there were some features in the scene that was going on which became too strongly marked and obvious to escape her observation any longer.

Frederic had shaken hands with her when he entered the room, but had not looked at her since; this she could have borne without a particle of anger, and, in truth, without seeing a particle of offence in it, for she fully believed that he was pursuing the good work he had begun, in procuring sitters for Charles among the friends he had brought with him.

But she did not, for she could not, long fail to perceive that he exchanged not a single word with Charles himself; and what wounded her more deeply still, that he had taken no notice whatever of Mrs. Worthington, though he had met her more than once at the house of her aunt Elfreda.

She felt her colour rise, and her heart beat, as the continuance of this neglect became more and more obvious, till at length she too looked as much embarrassed and as ill at ease as the offending Frederic himself.

The rather remarkable circumstance of her not having been herself presented, either to the father of Lady Augusta, or to either of the ladies who had accompanied her, was certainly not unobserved; but it did not irritate her, as it did her cousin, nor wound her, as it did her aunt; for, in fact, her mind was not sufficiently at leisure to dwell upon it. But when she saw Charles, after looking for a moment at his mother, who was standing very conspicuously alone, and apart from the brilliant set who were chattering and laughing with very unrestrained gaiety around Mrs. Dorking,—when she saw him, with the most marked and conspicuous attention, take a chair across the room, and stand beside her till she had placed herself in it, her emotion (mixed up of various feelings) betrayed itself, to her inexpressible mortification, by filling her eyes with tears.

But the tears did not fall; there was a sort of burning indignation at her heart which seemed to dry them at their source, and she flattered herself they were unseen.

But in this she was mistaken; both Mrs. Dorking and Lady Augusta were aware of her

emotion, and both attributed it to the marked want of attention in Frederic. In this interpretation they were both right, and both wrong; right in believing that it was occasioned by the manner of Frederic, but wrong in fancying that it was his want of attention to herself.

She could have forgiven him that; she might even have forgiven his cold dry manner to Charles, and the very obvious care he took to keep as distant from him as possible; but she could not easily forgive the positive rudeness with which he avoided Mrs. Worthington, whom he affected not to recognise, and who in truth appeared, from their manner, to be invisible to himself, and to the whole party who entered with him.

After the very lively laughing talk above mentioned had continued for some time longer, Mrs. Worthington's chair being at the greatest possible distance from it, while her niece and her son were stationed on each side of her,—after this had continued long enough to render its impertinence sufficiently conspicuous to be offensive, Lady Augusta addressed her brother, Lord Worley, in a tone quite loud enough to be heard by the artist,—

“My dear Worley,” said she, “you have made me laugh till I have no strength left. It would be absolutely impossible for me to sit to-day! You know you are irresistible; so go, there's a darling brother, and make my excuses receivable, if not acceptable, to Mr. Worthington, and his cousin Miss Judith also. I must positively be disembarrassed of this dress, and then get some air in the Park, or I shall very decidedly expire.”

Charles paused for a moment in doubt whether he should step forward to meet this apology, or remain where he was to receive it. The puppy peerling allowed him no time to meditate, for stepping rapidly forward, and bowing to Judith, as if his embassy was expressly to her, he said, with his bold eyes audaciously fixed on her face, “Fair lady! will you plead my fainting sister's cause to your cousin? Will you have the immense kindness to make him comprehend that her sitting to-day is impossible?”

The imperturbability of countenance with which Judith received this address, of which she did not appear to hear a single word, being engaged in arranging the shawl of Mrs. Worthington, did her credit as an actress. And her cousin seconded her intention of bestowing neither look nor word upon the

messenger by looking him very full in the face himself, and saying, "Oh! certainly."

And having said this to her brother, he approached the fair lady herself very politely, assuring her that the alteration would be in no way inconvenient to him.

"That is charming!" returned her ladyship; and immediately passing her arm through that of Frederic, who having led her in was, of course, in duty bound to lead her out, she approached the door, talking to him very rapidly as she moved on, and stood waiting beside it till her father had led out one countess who was of the party, and her brother another; and then she followed, without turning her head, or having in any way paid her parting compliments to the "painter and his family."

The staircase of this Mortimer Street house was fortunately rather a narrow one—so narrow, indeed, as to make it easily appear that it was more civil to get out of the way of a lady than attempt to hand her down it; and of this Frederic Dorking so skilfully took advantage, that he ran back to the painting-room almost before he was missed, and, stretching out his hand to Judith, while still at several feet distance from her, said, in very hurried accents, "Good morning, Judith! Shall I see you to-night? Does my mother take you to Lady Hartwell's?"

Judith stretched out her hand in return, and the two hands met, and were joined together as they had often been before. But there was something new in the accent with which Judith said, "Your mother? No, Frederic; I do not think your mother is going to take me any where."

CHAPTER LXI.

No sooner had the affianced lover of Judith left the room, and shut the door behind him, which, under the circumstances, was a degree of politeness which Mrs. Worthington scarcely expected—no sooner was this done, than Judith dropped on her knees before her aunt, earnestly exclaiming, "Oh, aunt Worthington! aunt Worthington! Do you think he loves me?"

Mrs. Worthington, completely misunderstanding the meaning and nature of her appeal, and deeply shocked at what she believed to be the agonising doubts of her unfortunate niece as to the affection of the man she loved, and who had just given so much cause for doubt on the subject—poor Mrs. Worthington positively trembled with emotion as she

pressed her lips upon the forehead of the kneeling girl, and replied, "Love you, my Judith? How can we permit ourselves to doubt it! After all that has passed, my sweet child, how is it possible for us to doubt it?"

"And yet, aunt, I do assure you that his manner is not at all like what it used to be—I do assure you it is not!"

Mrs. Worthington was quite as thoroughly convinced of this as it was possible for Judith to be; but far, oh! very far was she from imagining that all Judith's earthly hopes hung upon the reality of this change. On the contrary, her pitying aunt, who watched her anxious eye and changing colour with the deepest pity, thought that, at the present moment at least, it would be best and safest to feed her with the belief that Frederic Dorking's love was unchanged and unchangeable.

Poor child! It was very like feeding her with poison. She only needed to believe *undoubtedly* that Frederic Dorking did indeed love her as he had done, when her own young heart so fearlessly gave its own love in exchange—she had only to believe *that* fully and undoubtedly, in order to make her lay her head upon her pillow, and pray to God that she never might raise it up again.

The vehement distance, the profound contempt, the strong moral abhorrence which had been inspired in her heart and soul by the manner in which Frederic and his hateful *clique* had treated her aunt Worthington and her cousin Charles, had made her positively shudder at the idea of becoming *his wife*—at the idea of being for ever and for ever mixed up with *them*!

And yet, if indeed he loved her still, if he felt, or fancied, that his happiness depended on the promise she had plighted to him, how could she ever dare to rescind it?

She looked up into the face of her aunt, as she uttered what she *hoped* might prove true, with an expression of such profound melancholy, such deep suffering, that Mrs. Worthington knew not what to make of her. For a moment the true state of the case flashed across her mind as possible; but she had her own reasons, not only for wishing not to make any mistake on the subject, but also for not wishing Judith to utter any thing in the heat of wounded feeling and proud resentment, which might not prove, upon longer trial, to be the final decision of her heart.

"Do not thus agitate yourself, my dear

girl," said she. "Get up, my Judith. Let us say no more about any of these fine folks at present. Your carriage is waiting for you, dearest; go home at once, and compose yourself. If, upon reflection, you wish to talk to me further, I will be ready to receive you in my own room to-morrow."

Judith, who was trembling in every joint, felt the kindness and the wisdom of this.

"I will, I will," she replied. "I will do both, aunt Penelope. I will go now, and I will come to your own room immediately after breakfast to-morrow."

Mrs. Worthington waited for her arrival with impatience, but waited not long. Aunt Penelope's own room door was shut upon the aunt and niece; and before it was opened again, about one-half of the secrets of poor Judith's heart were disclosed to her.

Judith did not tell her that she had learned to know the difference between a man of genius and a man of fashion; but she did tell her that she had found it quite impossible any longer to disguise from herself the fact, that she could never be happy amongst a set of people whose feelings, principles, and opinions were at utter variance with her own.

"If I believed," she continued, "if I believed, aunt Penelope, that Frederic Dorking's happiness would be destroyed by my refusing to marry him, I should think it my duty to keep my promise, however much I might myself suffer by doing so. And if it were to end so,—if it were to end by my becoming his wife, I do think, and believe, that it would not be my own fault if I did not do my duty. But even while I say this, and while I mean it too, from the very bottom of my heart, I feel a frightful sort of consciousness that I should often be at a loss to know in what that duty consisted. Advise me, dearest aunt! Tell me what you think I ought to do."

This was an appeal which Mrs. Worthington felt it difficult, or, at least, disagreeable to answer, because her own wishes were so very strongly in favour of Judith's giving up a connexion which, probably, every other friend she had in the world would consider as in every way most desirable. But it would have been more difficult still had she not, as an uninterrupted witness of the scene which had passed on the preceding day, become strongly persuaded that the fidelity of the young man himself was shaken. And it would assuredly have been greatly more disagreeable, had not her knowledge of her

single-minded and most truthful Judith been sufficient to convince her that the spell, whatever had formed it, which had bound her to Frederic Dorking was broken; and that the greatest kindness she could now do her would be the setting her heart at rest respecting the possibility of breaking off the connexion, without really compromising the happiness of the young man.

After meditating for a minute or two, therefore, upon the most righteous course that she could herself pursue, she replied: "Judith, it would have been difficult for me to have found courage to tell you that I do think Mr. Dorking's manner is changed, and therefore that I presume that his feelings are changed also. It would have been difficult, my dearest child, to have confessed this to you, had you not very completely convinced me that your own feelings are changed too. At your age, dear love, this cannot be deemed very extraordinary. You knew not what you felt; you knew not what you were promising. And even in the case of Mr. Dorking, though many years your senior, Judith, I can comprehend, if I cannot quite excuse, the change which we have remarked in him. He saw you in what, speaking comparatively, was a retired country neighbourhood, where you were not only unrivalled, my pretty Judith, in personal attractions, but where there was neither the overpowering influence of rank and fashion to attract his dazzled eyes elsewhere, nor any Mrs. Dorking at his side to point out their superiority, if there had been any. But here the case is different. Nor can I be insensible, my dear child, to the disadvantage which our being here is likely to prove to your position among persons of high rank and station."

Judith winced under this, and her smooth brow was painfully contracted, but she did not speak.

"I will not dwell upon this part of the subject, dearest," resumed Mrs. Worthington, "for you love us well enough to make it painful. But there is truth in it, nevertheless."

"Then dwell upon it, aunt Worthington!" cried Judith, earnestly. "Only teach me to believe this possible, and enable me to satisfy myself that it is true, and all my misery will be over. Think you that I could feel any scruple at withdrawing from a union with a man, who wished that union less earnestly on account of my relationship with you? You must feel yourself that such a union could never make me happy."

"I do feel it, my dear noble-minded child!" replied her aunt, with deep emotion.

"And I feel also," rejoined Judith, "that such a union could not be holy. There could be no truth in it. For ever, and for ever, it must be full of pretence and hollowness!"

Mrs. Worthington was again silent for some minutes. She felt all the truth of what Judith had said; but she felt, too, the terrible responsibility of uttering any thing that might influence her in giving up so very splendid a connexion. Judith sat with her eyes anxiously fixed upon her silent aunt, and then, finding the silence continue longer than she could patiently bear it, she sprung up, threw her arms round Mrs. Worthington's neck, embraced her closely, and then said,—
"Farewell, my beloved aunt Penelope! I never will ask you again to say a single syllable on this subject. I think I understand your thoughts, and that shall suffice me. You are engaged to dine with us to-morrow, you know. Till then, adieu!" And with these words she departed.

When this scene was over, Judith felt that she had great need to be alone; and very thankful was she to find, upon returning to Green Street, that her aunt was gone to a lecture in Albemarle Street. Nevertheless, the retirement of the unoccupied drawing-room did not seem sufficiently profound and secure, and it was therefore in her own little room that she shut herself, locking the door to secure herself from all possible interruption. And truly she had enough to think of; and it would have been well for her had that been all, for her thoughts, for the most part, were very far from being disagreeable; but she soon remembered that she had something besides thinking to occupy her,—she remembered that she had a great deal to do. There was much that was very awful in the business before her, and it required a firm purpose and a resolute spirit to perform it; but these requisites were not wanting. The first thing needful was, that she should address herself with all sincerity to Frederic Dorking himself, and inform him that she had changed her mind upon the important subject of becoming his wife.

That was her first task, and it would have been more painful and more difficult than it was, had not the impression of his conduct and manner towards her cousin and her aunt been still fresh in her mind, bringing a strong conviction to her heart, that however genuine

his feelings of affection for her might have been at Westhampton, they had not been able to withstand the action of the counter-acting feelings to which he had been subjected under the influence of his mother, and of the very air and climate which he seemed to breathe in London.

This conviction robbed her task of all its real bitterness, for she felt that the communication she was about to make would bring more of relief than sorrow with it; and she therefore sat down with a steady heart, and not a very unsteady hand, to write the following letter.

CHAPTER LXII.

From Judith Maitland to Frederic Dorking.

"I cannot think that the contents of this letter will surprise you much; and still less can I believe that they will greatly pain you. We have both, I am afraid, something for which we may blame each other; but also I am quite sure that there is much for which we both must blame ourselves. Before you have read thus far, you will have guessed that I am writing to tell you that the engagement between us must be broken off; and if you feel as strongly as I think you do, that it will be better for us both that it should be so, you will have the generosity to confess it, and not to reproach me. Were it necessary for me to enter into what I believe to be your feelings, or into what I know to be my own, I could make it very evident to anybody, and everybody, that we should not act wisely, nor conscientiously, by adhering to an engagement very rashly made, and which nothing but false delicacy could make us fear to break. Do not think it necessary to answer this letter; the doing so may be painful to you, and could not possibly make any alteration in the relation in which for the future we shall stand to each other. I feel convinced, without your telling me so, that I possess your good wishes; and let me beg you to accept the assurance of mine.

"JUDITH MAITLAND."

* * * *

It would have been a great comfort to Judith, could she have shown this important epistle to her aunt Worthington, and received from her an approving judgment upon it. But a feeling of delicacy forbade her showing

it to her at all. In the first place, she did not wish that she should be compromised at all in the transaction; and in the next, she wished not to force upon her any farther the conviction that it was written in consequence of Mr. Dorking's behaviour to herself and Charles, which was the conclusion to which she both hoped and expected that Mr. Frederic Dorking would arrive himself, and which she felt pretty certain her aunt could not miss, if it were submitted to her.

Judith, therefore, unlocked her door, and rang her bell; for she certainly felt no inclination to submit the document to her aunt Elfreda,—smiling a little, as the idea occurred to her, that her letter was as likely to be intercepted by this aunt as Mr. Dorking's first epistle by the other.

The footman was summoned and the letter sent, with particularly implicit instructions that he was *not* to wait for an answer. And then Judith sat herself down in the very strongest frame of mind imaginable, her heart beating and her temples throbbing at the hardihood of the deed she had done, and yet with a lightness of spirit and a feeling of contentment that she had not enjoyed for many weeks.

The feelings of Mr. Frederic Dorking, on reading this letter, were of a very mixed nature. His first thought was, that he had deserved it. The second, that Judith had acted like an angel, and that he would never give her up. The third fell back upon all the enormous difficulties which he knew the Worthington connexion would bring upon him; and the fourth dictated the dutiful resolution that he would immediately show the letter to his mother.

It must be quite needless to bestow any time upon describing the feelings of Mrs. Dorking as she perused it. They were powerful, but at the same time very agreeable; and she had, therefore, no difficulty in restraining her expressions within the bounds of the most perfect good-breeding and propriety.

"The young lady was too young to know her own mind, my dear Frederic. And all we can say is, that it is better she should have discovered this fact now than later."

"Certainly!" replied her son, not quite, perhaps, without a feeling of indignation that a woman on such an occasion, or rather concerning such an individual as himself, should ever change her mind at all. And then he said, probably because it was necessary to say something, "Do you not think, my dear

mother, that it will create a tremendous degree of gossip amongst our own set? The thing was so universally known."

Mrs. Dorking only shrugged her shoulders in reply; and her son Frederic then added,

"Because, if you think it better, I feel quite sure I could make her reverse the sentence."

"For Heaven's sake, Frederic, do not talk such distracted nonsense! Leave well alone, my dear son, and be very thankful that the trouble of breaking off this most ridiculous affair has not been thrown upon you. Judith Maitland, with her pretty face, and pretty fortune, will make an excellent match for some one a little less distinguished in society than yourself, provided she does not marry her cousin the painter first. But you, my dear son, are intended for something better than that. You know, Frederic, that it has never been my system to torment you about any thing. But now that the young lady has thought proper to refuse you, I suppose you will permit me to say that I am very glad of it."

"Marry her cousin the painter first!" repeated Frederic, very indignantly. "No, mother! there is no danger of her doing *that*. However, it is possible that you are right as to our not being exactly in the same station in life. She is a most angelic creature! but it is but too certain that unequal alliances are never happy."

And then the young man ordered his horse, and rode in the Park; and it so chanced that he met Charles Worthington walking there. Charles looked up into his face as he passed him, probably by accident, but took no notice of him, and walked on.

In the uncomfortable vacillating state of mind, from which Frederic Dorking was suffering at that moment, every incident was critical, or, at any rate, influential. "It would be detestable enough," thought he, "to be living on such terms with one's wife's first cousin! And yet the other extreme might be worse still." And he rode on, meditating moodily enough both on the letter of Judith, and on the insolence of her cousin, as he pleased to call the prudent retreat of Charles into himself from the possible repetition of such a lesson as he had received the day before. In a word, Mr. Frederic Dorking returned to Berkeley Square in a state of mind which some among us may have heard described as "first-rate disgusted;" and before the end of the week his name might

have been found, by those who are curious in such researches, among the fashionable arrivals at the "Hôtel de Londres, Place Vendôme."

CHAPTER LXIII.

It can be scarcely necessary to mention that these very interesting scenes and events were followed by a good deal of *boudoir causerie* between Mrs. Dorking and the Lady Augusta Trevors. The wishes and the hopes freely expressed therein by both were in the most harmonious accord. You could not "desire better sympathy;" and even the sudden departure for France of the hero of all they uttered was far from casting any lasting gloom upon their spirits; for, as Mrs. Dorking well observed, nothing on earth could be more natural. He was in a state of transition, and he was quite right to take himself off till it was over; after which they could neither of them entertain any reasonable doubt that he would re-appear again more brilliant than ever.

Everything that they had plotted, planned, and performed together, appeared to have succeeded in the most perfect accordance with their wishes and their hopes; and, thus encouraged, they decided upon adding a little *finishing*, for the purpose, as Mrs. Dorking observed, of preventing the possibility of anything disagreeable being said in any quarter.

This *finishing* consisted in their decision that the portrait of the young lady should go on; and in that case the portrait of her father also would, of course, go on too,—for he, noble lord, knew no more of the Mortimer Street intrigue than he did of the man in the moon.

"So, in fact, you see, my dear Mrs. Dorking," said Lady Augusta, with a charming smile, "we shall, after all, have been very important patrons to '*cousin Charles*;' the only difference made by Miss Judith's letter being, that I will not again trouble her to bestow her company upon me during the sittings. My brother, Lord Worley, will always go with me if I make Lady Jarrington go too; and his being my escort is so very natural, that I do not think it possible to establish any impertinent observations upon it."

"Admirably arranged!" returned Mrs. Dorking. "But the man won't turn your beautiful portrait into a fright, will he, dear? in order to show his noble indignation at our

not cultivating his personal acquaintance," she added.

"Have no fears on that subject, dear lady," replied Lady Augusta, laughing. "There is no great vanity, I suppose, in my saying that he has made a very pretty composition. Lady Jarrington, who is a decided amateur, declares that she has not seen any thing so clever for ages; and I do not suspect the young man of being so indifferent to his own success as to mar that picture, for the sake of all the cousin Judith's in the world."

In this surmise Lady Augusta Trevors was perfectly correct. Charles felt that the portrait promised to be a good portrait; and his not feeling particularly depressed or out of spirits, in consequence of Judith's dismissal of the "elegant Frederic," as he was accustomed to call him, but, perhaps, if any thing rather the contrary, was rather favourable to the work than otherwise.

Besides, he greatly preferred having Lord Worley and Lady Jarrington during the sittings, instead of his cousin Judith and his mother; so that, in short, the work went on as prosperously as his heart could wish.

The portrait of the young lady's father, too, promised to be equally successful; and then Lady Jarrington, who was a pretty little brunette, as unlike Lady Augusta in style as it was possible for a pretty woman to be, suddenly decided upon having her portrait taken too. And into this portrait the rapid and spirited hand of the young artist threw so much of life and *espièglerie*, that the lively original, who was one of the prettiest and cleverest coquettes in London, soon contrived that it should be the theme of admiration and chit-chat through many of the most influential *salons* of the season; and the result was such a rush to the painting-room of Charles, as made him talked of from one end of the town to the other.

The success which followed exceeded, to use his own expression when speaking on the subject to his mother, his very brightest earliest dreams; and the delight of this to cousin Judith need not be dwelt upon in order to be understood.

But this is forestalling.

Before Judith had reached this happy point of existence, she had had to pass through more than one painful ordeal.

After the scene which has been described in Charles's painting-room, and which was the final and immediate cause of her with-

drawing herself from the engagement which had become so repugnant to her feelings, her first step was, of course, to inform Frederic himself of her change of purpose. And when this was done, in the manner we have seen, she felt as if delivered from an intolerable load which had for many weeks past lain upon her heart, till every feeling approaching to enjoyment was utterly destroyed by it.

The relief this decisive act brought to her spirits was so soothing, that, with rather a cowardly sort of feeling, she resolved to enjoy it for a few short days before she again ruffled the course of her existence by communicating what she had done to her aunt Elfreda. She certainly dreaded, not a little, both the grief and the anger this disclosure was sure to produce; nor was the sending this news to Mrs. Chilbert a task at all more agreeable. Both might be deferred, she thought, without producing inconvenience to any one; and, moreover, some advantage would be gained in the way of preparation, as far as her aunt Elfreda was concerned, by the non-appearance of Frederic Dorking in Green Street.

She indulged herself meanwhile, however, without restraint in talking over the whole affair with her aunt Worthington, and did not scruple, when the deed was done, to put into her hands the courageous document by which, as she said, she had restored to herself the precious freedom which she had given away before she knew what she was about.

And then, the deed being done, Mrs. Worthington herself did not scruple to confess that she rejoiced.

"That the marriage would have been a very brilliant one, I am quite aware," said she; "and I neither am, nor ever have been, notwithstanding my own early history may have given my family reason to doubt the fact,—I never have been insensible, Judith, to the positive advantages of rank and fortune. I only think that they may be purchased too dearly. As to Mr. Dorking himself, there was much besides either rank or fortune to recommend him; he had much that was attractive, much that was amiable, about him. But it was very evident that he wanted firmness of character, and it could scarcely have been hoped that in a union with him you should have been long happy; for as your own faculties went on (as they must do) strengthening and expanding as you grow older, you could not have long remained satisfied with his."

"This is so true, so very true," replied Judith, with an earnestness that brought tears to her eyes, "that I do declare to you that the doubts which have tortured me of late have been as much a matter of conscience as of—of—may I say *distaste*, without speaking too unkindly of Mr. Dorking?"

"There is no need to say it—there is no need to say any thing explanatory either of your feelings or motives, Judith," replied her aunt. "Your extreme youth at the time the engagement was formed will be an excuse obvious to all who choose to sit in judgment on the question. But there certainly is one grave and serious trouble left for you, my dear child," continued Mrs. Worthington, shaking her head, "and it is one, Judith, that I do not think you ought to put off any longer. I mean, as I am quite sure you have guessed already, the telling my sister Elfreda what has happened."

"Yes, aunt," replied poor Judith, with a heavy sigh.

"Very well, then, dear girl, do it at once. Do it this very day, as soon as you go home; and if you will say 'yes' again, my uncivil rejoinder will be, that the sooner you go home the better," said Mrs. Worthington firmly.

"No, aunt Penelope! not to-day, no,—nor to-morrow either; for to-morrow there is to be a champêtre breakfast at the villa of a duchess, and Charles knows, if you don't, that he will not have any sitters except Lady Morton's cherub children, and they, you know, always go home before two o'clock. And therefore, as I thought I had told you already, my beloved aunt, you are going to-morrow with your son, and your niece, and your sister too, if she will give up her lecture upon the comet, to see the cartoons at Hampton Court."

"Am I?" said Mrs. Worthington, smiling, but rather reproachfully. "Would not that do for some later day, Judith?"

"And the sitters?" said Judith, very reproachfully, in her turn. "Oh! aunt Penelope," she added, "if you did but know what I have suffered about those pictures at Hampton Court, you would not refuse me this one dear holiday before my work of penance begins. When I was at the very highest pinnacle of my favour with Mrs. Dorking, she proposed a pic-nic party to Hampton Court, expressly, as she said, for the purpose of showing me the cartoons. And I, who know I could as easily get St. Paul's cathedral in-

vited as either you or my cousin Charles, I had to invent delays, and finally find reasons for not going at all. And I did it too; *ergo*, I have never seen the cartoons. And surely, therefore, you will let me put off this terrible disclosure a couple of days longer?"

"Well, wilful one! I suppose you must have your way," replied her aunt; "but I will only go, Judith," she added, very gravely—"I will only go, Judith, on condition that you will promise me not to delay this confession beyond the day after to-morrow."

"Agreed!" said Judith. "Let us go into the painting-room for one moment—may we, aunt? I want to see how all the things get on."

This request was granted. Charles was reminded that the morrow was the day for Hampton Court, and so they parted, each of them probably rather more happy than they would have chosen to confess to the others.

The morrow, the very happy morrow, came. The sun shone brightly. Miss Elfreda was too scientific to forsake her lecture, but the trio contrived to do without her; and, moreover, a message arrived from Lady Morton before ten o'clock, saying that her children had colds, which would prevent their waiting upon Mr. Worthington that morning. So that every thing was as propitious as the heart of Judith could wish, and never was an expedition more thoroughly enjoyed.

It had been settled that they were to dine with Miss Elfreda at a late hour, and pass a quiet evening with her, quite *en famille*. Her partiality for her nephew Charles had gone on very rapidly increasing from the time that he had requested her to sit for her picture; and it is equally true, that the want of courtesy and observance shown by Mrs. Dorking towards her on various occasions, but particularly by her not having been invited to her ball, had gone farther towards making her feel that Charles, with all his brilliant talents, was a more important personage to her than Mr. Frederic Dorking and all his brilliant prospects, than Judith had as yet dared to flatter herself could be possible.

On arriving in high spirits, however, at Miss Elfreda's dwelling upon the present occasion, they were all struck by the air of sadness which seemed to have taken possession of her features; and each individual of the trio felt convinced that, by some means or other, she had been made acquainted with the separation which had taken place between Judith and her lover.

The heart of the conscious girl sunk within her, and she felt but too certain that this one dear evening, which she hoped to pass in the peaceable enjoyment of all that she best loved, was about to be poisoned by her disappointed aunt Elfreda's lectures upon her wickedness! They were all three, however, extremely surprised, and extremely puzzled, by the manner in which her disappointment displayed itself.

Instead of testifying any displeasure towards Judith, every word she addressed to her seemed replete with the most gentle and pitying tenderness.

Now this was, at any rate, a great deal better than being scolded, and the consequence of her feeling it to be so put Judith so much at her ease and, in fact, into such gay spirits, that she uttered sally after sally, full of mirth and happiness.

Whereupon Miss Elfreda, having apparently endured this as long as she could, suddenly seized upon Judith, and, clasping her to her bosom, exclaimed, "Alas! my poor dear child! it is too, too melancholy to see you in such high spirits, when I know the terrible blow that awaits you!"

"What is it you mean?" cried Charles, greatly agitated; "what is it that awaits my cousin Judith?"

"You have none of you seen the 'Morning Post' to-day? But I need not ask you. It is but too evident that you none of you know any thing about it!"

"About what, Elfreda?" demanded Mrs. Worthington, earnestly. "You have made Judith look very pale, sister."

"Only tell me," said Judith, "only tell me, aunt Elfreda! Has any thing happened to Mrs. Chilbert?"

"To Mrs. Chilbert? No, no, my poor child," replied the pitying Miss Elfreda. "It is something a good deal worse than that, Judith! I fear—I fear that Frederic Dorking is in reality as false and cold-hearted as his proud mother! In one word, Judith, I fear he has forsaken you!—for the 'Morning Post' announces his arrival among the fashionable people at Paris; and if he has really gone there without saying a single word to you about it, what are we to think?"

For "one moment and no more," the eyes of Charles and Judith met, and a strong inclination to smile was in great danger of becoming perceptible on the face of each. But Judith parried the mischief which might have ensued, by saying, very gravely,—

"I would have you think, dear aunt, ex—

actly what I think myself, and what we can have no doubt Mr. Frederic Dorking thinks too; namely, that we shall both of us be better asunder than together. You know, aunt Elfreda, that however civil his mother and father have been to me, probably on account of my fortune, they have given the most decided and, I must say, the most offensive proofs that they do not consider you, or any other member of my family, as worthy of becoming members of theirs; and if such is their feeling, aunt Elfreda, you need not fear that my happiness will be the sacrifice to our separation. Believe me that, in that case, it would have been much more likely to have been sacrificed by our union."

"I am sure it is very pretty and very dutiful of you to say so, my dear! And I cannot but own that her not asking me to her ball does look very much indeed as if you were right. Mr. Frederic himself did not behave as a lover ought upon such an occasion, for he certainly might have got me invited, if he had cared enough about you to try."

"I do not believe that we shall any of us greatly differ with you in opinion on this point," replied Judith; "and if this be so, we surely shall not devote many more of our thoughts either to him or his family. I was very, *very* young, aunt Elfreda, when this engagement was formed, and that must be my excuse for not breaking my heart because it is at an end. Let us talk no more about it!"

As it was afterwards agreed between Judith and her confidential aunt Penelope that no possible good could be done by stating exactly all the circumstances of the case to Miss Elfreda, and that a great deal of mischief might be avoided by letting it alone, it was finally agreed between them that the willow should be assigned to her, and not to the gentleman, who, as Judith said, would probably find it much more troublesome to wear than she should do.

Mr. Frederic Dorking kept his own counsel too; and it therefore soon became the generally-received idea, that the young man, having himself got tired of the *mésalliance* with which he had threatened his charming mother, had suddenly gone abroad in order to get rid of it.

CHAPTER LXIV.

If the Reader imagines that the effect of this important change in the destiny of Judith was to inspire in Charles Worthington

any hope of succeeding Frederic Dorking in her heart, he is very greatly mistaken. It is true that Charles had never been in love before he first beheld his cousin Judith; and it is true also, that, if at any moment of his adult existence he had taxed his imagination to paint for him exactly such a woman as he could most devotedly have loved, the product would probably have been something exceedingly like, in form and feature, in heart and soul, in temper and character, in taste and pursuit, such a creature as he had found in his cousin Judith.

Yet, nevertheless, he was still at an immense distance from being in love with her; therefore it may fairly be asked what thoughts, what hopes, what intentions could he have had? And I can truly answer, none, none whatever, absolutely and positively none. Then, how was it possible he could be in love with her? The only clear and distinct thought he had about her was, that she was a rich heiress; and the most clear and distinct thought that he had about himself was that he was penniless.

And had Judith at this time any very distinct thoughts about a future union with Charles Worthington? No! most certainly she had not.

She felt, poor girl, and felt very painfully, that she had already compromised her delicacy in having rashly promised to marry a man, for no other reason in the world, that she could now assign, except that he had asked her to do so.

Crimson was the blush with which she remembered the feeling of extreme gratitude with which his proposal had inspired her!

And this she had taken for love! Alas! how little did she know then what love was!

And now she wondered, too, that her dear Mrs. Chilbert could have been so rash and thoughtless as to give her credit for feeling what it now seemed to her to have been so very improbable that she could feel.

And she remembered, also, with a sentiment very nearly approaching indignation, the cordial congratulations of Dr. Wroughtley on the *brilliant* conquest she had made; by which brilliance she was now very sure that he meant wealth and station!

And was it possible that her Mrs. Chilbert meant the same? No, no! *That* was impossible! Yet still she ought to have been more cautious for her.

But let who might be to blame besides, it

must be quite certain that *she* was herself the most to blame of all!

And what could Charles think upon the subject? Either that she was inconstant as the wind, or else that she had, in truth, as she herself confessed to her own heart, consented to marry a young gentleman for no other reason in the world than because he had asked her!

Such being the respective condition of these young people, it was not very likely that they should speedily come to an understanding, and discover that they were as heartily and passionately in love with each other as it was well possible for a young man and maiden to be.

Nevertheless, they were very far from being in a condition that would be called unhappy. With all her remorse for the wicked weakness which had led her to fancy herself in love when there was no such thing, Judith was by no means insensible to the blessing of being free again, and of having no worse misery to fear, as the punishment of her imprudence, than the regret—and, as she felt it, the *shame* of having committed it.

And as to Charles, he had been too well taught in the school of real sorrow to mistake the absence of perfect happiness for the presence of misery. Besides, all worldly concerns were going well with him. He had referred to Mr. Carey to decide for him what price he ought to ask for his portraits; and that gentleman having obtained the young artist's permission to bring two of the first artists of the day to sit in judgment on his works, the result was, that so high a price was named as greatly to astonish him. But having sought advice, he determined to abide by it; yet, nevertheless, had speedily so many orders, that it required all the activity of his age and energetic character to enable him to get through all the work which he undertook.

Mr. Carey had helped them very effectually, also, in the disposal of the diamonds, which produced a sum amply sufficient to set free the gallery of pictures left at Rome. To dispose of these advantageously was a matter of great importance; and it was finally decided, that when London was sufficiently empty to prevent any great chance of new sitters, Charles should run off to his native Rome, and decide there what it would be best to do with them. And then it was that a thought, and a wish, which had long taken possession of Judith, was at length put into

execution; her aunt Worthington was invited to make one of Miss Elfreda's family!

This very happy arrangement was not brought about without a little good management on the part of the young heiress; but this, together with the help of a little eloquence on the part of Mr. Carey, so wrought upon the feelings of Miss Elfreda, that she was at length brought to express her conviction that they were right, and that the taking, by Judith's willing help, a whole house in the Regent's Park might, as the carriage was not to be given up, form altogether a still more desirable establishment than that on which she had so much prided herself in Green Street.

Not all her lectures had done her half so much good in the way of instruction as a little of Mrs. Dorking's impertinence, and Miss Elfreda was a wiser woman for it during the whole of her after-life; which it is probable could not be said with equal veracity of any of the various scientific pursuits to which she had applied herself for the greater part of her existence.

But the charming Mrs. Chilbert has been forgotten too long in the hurry of these important changes. Judith had again, in her case, as in that of her aunt Elfreda, the good luck of being spared the announcement of her splendid engagement being at an end, by Mrs. Chilbert's having read the announcement of Mr. Frederic Dorking's arrival in Paris.

She lost not an hour in writing to her young friend for information on the subject, evidently fearing that something "wrong," as she expressed it, must have occurred to send such a man as Frederic Dorking out of London, when there were so many delightful reasons for his remaining in it.

Judith's answer to this letter was certainly not, strictly speaking, what could be called satisfactory. For, in the first place, she confirmed her friend's worst fears by avowing that the engagement was at an end between them, and in the next she deferred to some future meeting the task of relating all particulars.

But the vexed Mrs. Chilbert thought she understood all the particulars perfectly well, when she learned from the indignant Miss Barbara that her sister Elfreda had been weak enough, and, as she could not but call it, wicked enough, to take in Mrs. Worthington to keep house with her.

"And where is the young man? Mrs.

Worthington's son, I mean," said Mrs. Chilbert, recollecting how much her fears of him had increased the zeal with which she had propitiated the admiration of Frederic Dorking for her (too) young friend.

"Upon my word, ma'am, I neither know nor care," was the ungentle reply. "But he is living with them, of course—at least I suppose so."

Charles Worthington, however, was better employed than he could have been if he had been living with them, even if he had had half the aristocracy of England sitting to him the while; for he was studying—studying as perhaps no man can study, save at Rome.

Not that he took any picture or pictures there, from the sublime Transfiguration to the touching Cenci, as his models. There was more of science than of mimicry in his studies. He studied anatomy in the same school where Michael Angelo had studied it before him. Outline and expression he found wandering in the streets; gorgeousness and grace in architecture—where could he look and not find it? Atmosphere he studied in the Campagna, and colouring everywhere.

And in this way three years of immense importance to him wore away, not rapidly, for every day, and almost every hour, seemed to leave its mark.

At the end of that time he returned to England, not at all a richer man than when he left it, for he had not painted a single picture for sale. But the collection of pictures, which had caused him so much sorrow, had been gradually and advantageously disposed of, so as to supply both his mother and himself with all they wanted,—and Charles was not at all afraid to spend it, for he felt a very comfortable confidence in his power of making more by his art.

And what became of the ladies of the family during this interval? Their history is soon told. Mrs. Worthington, notwithstanding the prolonged absence of her son, was very far from being unhappy; Judith supplied his place much better than any one else could have done. Miss Elfreda was in every way delighted with the change in their manner of living, and felt herself to be of so much more consequence than before, that she actually had her cards printed Mrs. E. Jenkyns, in order, as she said, to be consistent.

And Judith! Was Judith unhappy in her greatly changed state of existence? No. On

the contrary, she was infinitely happier than in her most successful days of fashionable celebrity she had ever hoped to be.

A very young lady, who has fancied herself very much in love, and being very heartily ashamed of herself when she found out that she was mistaken, is not likely very speedily to suffer again from another attack of the tender passion; and it was probably for this reason that Judith did not *suffer*, though, nevertheless, it can hardly be denied that she was in love with her cousin Charles. But her condition was not that of suffering. In the first place, she had a constant feeling of thankfulness for the turn affairs had taken, and this was a very happy sensation. And where now was all her heart-aching anxiety about her aunt Penelope? All the heart-aching was gone, and the anxiety to make her happy was converted into a never-ceasing source of happiness.

Another source of enjoyment was found in summer and autumn travelling through all the most beautiful scenery of England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. And they might have wandered further still, for they all enjoyed it, only they were told that there might be trouble, if Miss Barbara chose to make a fuss about it, in obtaining permission for the ward in Chancery to go abroad; and they very wisely agreed, therefore, to wait for this till Judith was of age.

And, upon two of their pleasant tours, the kind-hearted heiress obtained permission to give the fourth place in their travelling-carriage to poor Miss Tollbridge, who had never been forgotten by her, though she seemed to have been by her unobservant historian,—and, in short, my beautiful heroine passed three very happy and very profitable years without any love-making at all.

Mrs. Chilbert was exceedingly puzzled, and so was Dr. Wroughtley; and the latter would have been very apt to suspect that the two old ladies, who had got such fair possession of her, were keeping it by the strong hand, had he not still adhered firmly to his first opinion respecting Judith being a self-willed young lady. "To be sure," said the worthy senior prebend, when conversing upon the subject with Mrs. Chilbert, "it does seem to be a very mysterious business, from first to last. Such a beautiful girl as that, with a fine fortune too, remaining single all this time! It does look very much as if she were kept under pretty tight control. And yet, Mrs. Dean, I should not mind, now, taking a bet

that the young lady will contrive to have her own way at last."

Yet Charles came home, after three years of absence, without any thing in the least like love-making being hinted at by any of them. He brought home with him two pictures, which were exhibited with such extraordinary success, that a larger painting-room than that in Mortimer Street was not quite large enough to accommodate all the pictures he had orders to paint, and all the people who came to look at them.

Success could not be greater or more rapid; and even the elegant Mrs. E. Jenkyns began to think that a celebrated painter might not altogether be a disgraceful connection.

The pride, the joy, the measureless contentment of his mother and his cousin Judith must be imagined,—and no imagination can do it more than justice. Within rather more than a year after Charles Worthington returned to England, Judith Maitland came of age. But the being put into possession of her fortune made little or no difference in their domestic arrangements, excepting, indeed, that Mrs. E. Jenkyns rather suddenly announced to her sister and niece that, as it was probable that her niece would now choose to become mistress of her own house, she had thought it advisable to promise to become mistress of that of the Herr Hans Wagner, a gentleman who spoke English perfectly, as was proved by his lecturing in that language with great success at a lecture-room not very far from the Regent's Park, to which she had for some time been in the habit of resorting very punctually.

Judith, on hearing this, very generously made her a present of the house and furniture which had been purchased for her at the time they left Green Street. Her strong wish to go abroad, to which there was now no longer any objection, made this arrangement very convenient to all parties; and Mr. and Mrs. Wagner took possession of the premises the very day that Mrs. Worthington, her son Charles, and her niece Judith set out upon a tour to the continent.

CONCLUSION.

THE passion for scenery-hunting which, as I have been told a hundred times, is so essentially characteristic of the inhabitants of "*les Iles Britanniques*," received a terrible check in the year of our Lord 1848, and this retained its preventive influence for a good while; but now the panic seems to have subsided,

and we hear of our friends and acquaintance flying off again, north, east, west, and south, in pursuit of the picturesque.

The check may have been useful in more ways than one; for an impediment removed unquestionably adds pleasure to our progress, and, moreover, the abstaining from beating the high-roads of any country for a year or two improves our chance of finding something new to look at when we start off anew.

I do not mean to tell the English tourist, that if he will pass from Venice into Austria he will see now what he could never have seen before in the way of scenery; but I may tell him, that if he will linger a little about the Pass of Ampezzo, and more particularly in that part of it known by the name of Capo del Cadore, he may not only see the spot where Titian was born, and which tells in characters earth-born, yet divine, where and how it was that the immortal Venetian got those bits of back-ground which make us look out of the windows of his portraits as if we were looking upon Heaven's own workmanship; he may not only see this, but he may see something exceedingly well worth looking at besides.

A particular friend of mine assures me that, just in the most beautiful part of this remarkable region, an accident occurred to his carriage, which, though it did no injury to life or limb, might have been productive of much inconvenience to him but for the following incident. The carriage was overturned, and his servants were engaged, as is usual upon such occasions, in disentangling the horses from their harness, when he, who was standing somewhat disconsolately by the side of his carriage, was addressed in English by a tall gentleman, who leaped from a bank with a sketch-book in one hand and a pencil in the other, begging to know if he could be of any use.

The unfortunate traveller returned the friendly salutation very gratefully, stating frankly that he did not very well know how to dispose of himself and his luggage while his carriage, which was considerably injured, was being put into travelling condition again.

"Concerning yourself and your luggage, there will be no difficulty, for my house is within ten minutes' walking; but I am afraid we must go further before you will find a workman that you would like to employ upon your carriage. The first thing to be done, however, now that the poor horses are extricated, is to convey your luggage to the forest

abode to which, I hope, you are going yourself. And here comes one of my own labourers, who may assist your servant in conveying your things; and he may be consulted, too, as to the best way of getting the carriage set to rights."

All this was very pleasant, and very fortunate, and my travelling friend gladly, and gratefully, received the kindness offered to him. A few minutes set every thing in a fair way of being well arranged, the new-comer, who seemed to be a very intelligent sort of personage, giving it as his opinion that the carriage might be put into safe travelling condition by a wheelwright in the neighbouring dorf. And orders being given accordingly, the traveller and his hospitable new acquaintance set off upon their ten minutes' walk.

The walk, however, took more than ten minutes, though the distance, perhaps, might have been easily traversed in that time. But at a point a few hundred yards from the place of meeting, they turned from the high road into a path not easily passed at full speed.

There is no possibility of describing, at least none vested in me, the bold hills and the narrow valleys, the dark forests and the little flowery meads, the rushing waters and the frowning rocks of the region surrounding Capo del Cadore, and amongst all this it was that my touring friend was now led; and, although the path is a very well-made path, and has evidently been carefully attended to of late, in order to convert it, in spite of its wild neighbourhood, into a pleasant walk for no ungentle feet—notwithstanding this, it was impossible to pass along it rapidly.

Every step seemed to disclose some new charm, for charm there was even in the black gorges that sometimes opened almost beneath their feet; and in the strange variety of light and shade there was charm too—and in the wide-spreading distance there, and in the close leafy covert here, none of it could be passed by without pausing.

But at last this enchanting path seemed to end, for it came to a turn so sudden, as to show nothing beyond it but a vast mass of perpendicular rock.

But, the sudden turn being followed, the scene changed into something as different from all they had been passing through, as it was well possible for art and nature combined to make it.

Instead of the frowning rock, they beheld a smiling lawn; and, instead of tangled forest, a low but wide-spreading mansion, surround-

ed on all sides by an ample colonnade, which seemed by the chairs, and even sofas, which were placed in it, to be a well-loved part of the mansion.

The whole scene, both from the effect of contrast and its own enchanting loveliness, caused the tourist to stop short to gaze upon it, as if he had been spell-bound; and his hospitable conductor smiled at the vehemence of the exclamation by which his admiration was expressed.

A few hundred yards further brought them to the gate of the slight fence which surrounded the little lawn, and a few steps further still displayed a group as picturesque in its way as any of the enchanting scenes they had passed in reaching it. It consisted of an elderly lady, who, if an elderly lady could by possibility be beautiful, might assuredly be so described, for her countenance expressed both sweetness and intelligence, and her figure had both grace and dignity. She was knitting, as all ladies seem to do on approaching Germany, as if by instinct; but there was more of idleness than of occupation in her attitude, for it was evident that more of her attention was given to the landscape than to her work, and more to the two companions who were near her than to either.

To both of these, however, this epithet of *beautiful* might very safely have been applied without any qualification whatever, the one being a very perfectly lovely woman, not apparently much past twenty; and the other a crawling cowering boy, thrown, as if by accident, among a heap of cushions at the feet of his young mother, and evidently not having yet numbered twelve months.

Young as he was, however, he hailed the approach of his father by a cry so eloquent of joy, that Charles Worthington (for this hospitable indweller at Capo del Cadore was Charles Worthington) suspended his introduction of the stranger guest to his wife and his mother till he had caught him in his arms, and repaid his welcome by a kiss.

And does the reader believe that his beautiful wife was any other than the wilful Judith? If he does, he is mistaken.

All that must have passed in the interval since they left England is, in fact, too easily imagined to make description of it necessary. It was not very likely that they could visit France, Italy, Switzerland, and Germany together, without confessing to each other the respective states of each other's hearts; and

though Charles was a little annoyed on account of Judith's being so very rich, she gave him great comfort under the infliction by pointing out the fact, that he might easily double her income by painting, if she could afford him sufficient leisure so to employ himself. And, in fact, he does sometimes, at Rome, where their winters are generally spent, paint a picture, for which he gets an enormous price; and he threatens now to paint a great many more, because there is great probability that his family may increase.

As to the ever-dear friend of her girlhood, the very charming but a little fine Mrs. Chilbert, it took some time to convince her thoroughly that she had been wrong, and Judith right, in the judgments they had respectively formed respecting the choice of a husband. It was not easy to convince her that it was possible a very agreeable young painter could be reasonably preferred to a very agreeable

young nobleman,—for Frederic Dorking had attained that rank before she confessed herself wrong; and it may even now be doubted if that confession would ever have been made had she not happened to hear Charles Worthington sing, under the shadow of his own vine, at his Venetian farm at Capo del Cadore.

The Lady Augusta Trevors is still unmarried; and a particularly confidential friend of Frederic Dorking's has been heard to declare that, of all women living, the said Frederic dislikes the Lady Augusta Trevors the most.

Does anybody want to know what has become of Miss Barbara Jenkyns? Nothing has become of her. To the best of my knowledge and belief there she is still, playing whist and giving little suppers at Westhampton; but nobody has ever heard of Dr. Wroughtley's dining with her *tête-à-tête* again.

THE END.

THE SELF-SEER.

A TALE.

CHAPTER I.

Unless above himself he can
Erect himself, how poor a thing is man!
Wordsworth.

HERMAN WALDHOF was indulging in a love-reverie. He sat, leaning his chin upon his hand, in an easy, careless, *dolce far niente* attitude, before a large mirror. His eyes were earnestly fixed, Narcissus-like, upon the shadow of himself imaged therein.

Many said that young Herman Waldhof was the handsomest man in Leipsic, and Herman himself was scarcely disposed to deny the fact. It had been forced upon his notice so often during the last five-and-twenty years, that at length he took it for granted. Yet he was too high-minded to be very vain. He bore his honours as a monarch does his crown, conscious of the dignity which Fortune has bestowed, and, therefore, taking no pains to assert what must be obvious to all. But in the earnest look which Herman directed towards his mirror there was a deeper feeling than mere vanity. He loved; he hoped, yet hardly believed, that he was beloved again; and in the reflected features opposite to him might be read a look of doubt and anxious inquiry.

When one loves, how quickly does this feeling come! how does the mirror, which was before hardly noticed, or made only the resort of idle vanity, become like an adviser—a friend! We wish to see ourselves with the eyes of the beloved. We wish to know, without flattery, what we really are. We gaze with a feeling of lingering fondness, in which self-vanity has no share, on those features which we would fain believe are fair and precious in another's sight. Ah, thence proceeds all their charm in our own! Thus thought the young lover; and as he tossed back the dark clustering curls, and looked wistfully into the depths of the large eyes, and noted the graceful curves of the beautiful mouth, trying to criticise the well-known face which met his view with the indifference of a perfect stranger, his heart was full, not of himself, but of *her*.

A knock at the door made the young man instinctively turn his back to the mirror and

take up a book, but he could not keep down the colour that *would* rise to his very forehead at being discovered in the unmanly act of examining himself in the glass, even though it were by his friend and companion from boyhood, Leuthold Auerbach.

"Are you studying, or only dreaming, Herman?" said the new-comer, in those sweet low tones, so rarely heard in a man's voice, which are always the index of an eminently sensitive and gifted mind, which attract in a moment, and are the dearest heart-music in the world.

Herman answered the question with a faint laugh,—

"Both, I believe. But, Leuthold, I have a charge against thee, good friend, and from a fair one whom thou wouldst not willingly give cause of anger. I was last night at the old professor's, and the Lady Hilda"—the young man's colour deepened a little as he uttered the name—"Hilda asked why thou wert not there."

"Did she so?" Leuthold said.

Herman was too much engrossed by his own feelings, or he would have seen the sudden paleness, the quivering lip, the involuntary clench of the hands, that his words brought to Leuthold. Alas, he, too, loved! but love to him was no joy, only hopeless pain.

"What shall I say in thy defence, false knight, when I see her to-morrow?" Herman continued.

"Again!" muttered Leuthold.

There was a sore pang at his heart, but he repressed it, and said, calmly,—

"The Lady Hilda is ever kind; she always was, since the days when I was a poor student in her father's house. Tell her I was ill, or I would have come."

"Thou art not well now, poor friend!" said Herman, turning round, and laying his hand on his friend's shoulder. "Pale as ever—no, now thou art crimson! Leuthold, thou hast been studying far too much."

"It may be; a student must do so if he would attain his end. I am not like thee, Herman,—young, rich, handsome."

"Thou art quite as young," interrupted the other, "though thou dost not look so; and as rich, for thou hast enough for thy

wants, which is more than I often have for mine, I candidly confess. As to being handsome—— But, pshaw! what nonsense is this! I am so anxious, so full of thought, I cannot jest any more. Leuthold, thou shouldst pity me!”

“Pity *thee*!” said the student. “Thee—the pride of Leipzig, admired by all, loved by——”

“Oh, Leuthold, I know not that Hilda loves me! Last night I thought her so cold, and there was beside her that young Graf von P——, and she listened to him; she spoke fondly——”

“I do not believe it,” gravely answered Leuthold. “Hilda is too sincere, too pure-hearted, to sport with any one’s feelings thus.”

The lover clung eagerly to the willing belief.

“Ah, well, I might be wrong, but love is full of vagaries,—my whole soul is wrapped up in her! Tell me, Leuthold, thou who hast known her heart from childhood, whom she regards as a brother, am I such an one as Hilda would love?”

And the earnest Herman looked fixedly at his friend, to whom each unconscious word came like a barbed arrow. Yet not a muscle of Leuthold’s face quivered beneath the gaze; he grew strong through the intensity of the love which had made of his heart, not a home to abide in, but a tomb wherein it must be buried for evermore. Its presence was not known by outward sign, any more than the ashes resting under a green grave.

“Thou askest more than I can answer, dear Herman,” said Leuthold. “But think what thou art!”

“Oh, that I could see myself!” cried the impetuous young man. “Oh, that I could behold myself as I do any other man!—how I look, how I speak, how I act! Do you know what I was so mad as to be doing but now?” he added, colouring deeply. “Playing pranks before the mirror, and trying to judge of my own face as I would that of the fool Von P——, or any stranger! Oh, if I could see myself as I really am,—most of all as I appear in Hilda’s eyes! Is there no spell, no magic, that will give me my desire? Surely, Leuthold thou who hast studied the deep secrets of alchemy, who hast beheld the great Helvetius face to face, must know something!”

“Speak not of these things,” answered the student, solemnly. “To those who live in

the world, in its gay realities, the inner world of mystery is not open. Yet if it were as thou sayest,—if we could gain this knowledge, I, too, would desire it equally. And it may be so,” continued Leuthold, with wild and kindling eyes; “who knows! The more I study, the more I see that wisdom is unfathomable.”

He rose up and paced the room with an energy that made his slight figure dilate until it seemed in the twilight to grow to a giant’s size. Deeper and deeper gathered the shadows in the large lofty room; it was a noble hall, which the wealth of Herman Waldhof had gained from its old baronial owners, whose ancestors seemed to frown from the walls upon the new possessor. The twilight faded, and all became wrapped in gloom. Herman watched the dim figure of Leuthold as he moved backwards and forwards, utterly unconscious of his friend’s presence; sometimes murmuring, in a sort of monotonous chant, rhymes in a strange tongue, and then again maintaining a total silence. At last Herman, in the darkness, could only hear his footsteps resounding at measured intervals on the oaken floor. All this time the young man never moved. Gay-hearted as he seemed, Herman was deeply tinctured with the belief in supernatural things, which was called forth by the mysterious acts and words of many wise men of the middle ages. On his friend Leuthold, whom he knew to be deeply read in the lore of the cabalists and alchemists, he ever looked with almost reverent awe.

At last a touch on his arm made Herman start, and the student’s voice—but so low and changed that it seemed almost unearthly—fell on his ear,—

“It will be accomplished; wait and see; they are coming!” whispered Leuthold.

Overpowered with terror Herman would have fled, but his friend held him with a grasp that seemed like that of an iron hand.

“Weak man, wouldst thou shrink?” sternly cried the student.

“I shrink from meeting those thou hast called up—the fiends—the demons!”

“They are no demons, they are good spirits. Know, Herman, that each man born into the world has a guardian angel given him, which must attend him from birth until death. To the common herd of mankind, who eat and sleep, toil and rest, marry and die, without a thought beyond the petty round of daily life, this spirit is no more than an

inward voice—the voice of conscience. But to those on whom God has bestowed His glorious gift of genius a spark of His own divine essence—the angel of their being is far nearer; a presence that may be felt. The more they cultivate this inner sense the stronger it becomes, until they see with the open eyes of the soul, and hear with its angel-ears.

“I, even I,” cried Leuthold, while his voice rung through the gloom like the voice of an unseen spirit, I, even I, in my poverty, in my loneliness, in my despair, have seen the angel of my life standing beside me, whispering comfort and wisdom and joy, such as no earthly sorrows could take away. And now, by the power of my will and my faith, I have again brought this celestial guardian; and not only mine, but thine! Listen, they are coming!”

“And I!” cried Herman, in deadly fear.

“Thou mayest hear, thou canst not see them. Kneel, cover thy face, and pray. Think of all pure and holy things, of thy love on earth, of thy trust in heaven. Remember one evil thought will drive from thee these blessed spirits. Herman, they come—they come!”

Herman listened to a sound which he rather felt than heard; it was like the step of one beloved coming nearer and nearer, each soft foot-fall sending a thrill to the heart. And then he perceived that Leuthold had unclasped his hand, but that another was beside him. He fancied his hair was stirred by a soft breath, such as he had felt in dreams—dreams of Hilda—and it seemed that this angel-breath penetrated to his inmost heart, filling it with child-like purity and peace.

He was roused from this trance by the deep solemn tones of Leuthold, and knew that his friend was addressing no mortal, but the Angel of which he had spoken. With serene earnestness the student lifted up his voice, and told all his heart's desire to the mysterious Presences that Herman felt were with them in the room. He spoke not in slavish fear, but like one who, with a lofty and awful joy, holds communion with those who, though superior, are drawn to him by love, until they speak as friend to friend.

And he was answered. From the silence came forth a voice—not human, and yet like humanity in its sweetness. Much of what it said was inexplicable to Herman, whose whole life had been spent in worldly delights, and

who knew not the joys which the soul feels when retiring into communion with itself, and those essences to which it is akin. But Leuthold understood all.

“Listen,” said the Angel, “O thou who art my care! Man's is a double existence. Ever following his spirit, as the shadow follows his body, is a second self. It is not his soul, but only the reflexion of it, like the faint arch within the rainbow, or the giant mountain-shadows which mimic men. Generally this phantasm is inseparable from the reality which produces it; but at times man has been suffered to behold the reflex of himself; and often, too, has this second self appeared to those to whom the man was dear, a dim spectre of prophetic woe!”

“I know it, I know it!” cried Leuthold, mournfully. “Even the night before death took my mother from me, as we sat together in the twilight, I saw a Shadow like herself come and sit opposite to us! And she knew it was a sign, and went in and lay down calmly to rest—a rest that was eternal. But, O Angel, I would not thus see the phantom of myself; I desire to behold my living form as with the eye of a spirit. Canst thou grant this?”

“Only thus. Thou must thyself become the attendant shadow; must abstract thy mind for a season from all earthly things until it becomes as in dreams, separate from the body. Then thy spirit, or that portion of it which is active in dreams, may float over its living self, and behold, for a time, all that thou dost and all that thou art, even like a disembodied soul. But know, for each day in which by this fearful exercise of the will and the power of concentrating the mind within itself, thou thus gainest thy desire, a year will be taken from thy mortal life.”

“Even so—that would add to the boon,” said Leuthold, softly. “But, Herman, life is bright to thee, wilt thou consent likewise?”

Herman shuddered, and bowed his face lower to the earth, as he felt the invisible breath beside him form itself into a voice. But it was not like the one which had spoken to Leuthold—it sounded faint and indistinct.

“Once only in thy life mayst thou hear thine angel's voice, O Herman! and once only is this faculty permitted to thee. Wouldst thou for a single day behold thyself?”

“I would—I would!” muttered Herman; and as he spoke the whole chamber was

flooded with the light of the pale moon, as she broke through the edge of a dark cloud. He lifted up his head, but saw—only his friend, who, pale and almost insensible, leaned against the wall, like one just awakened out of a dream.

CHAPTER II.

Let me behold my outward self, and look
Within my spirit within a book.
What there is writ? Full many a mingled line,
Wise, foolish, fair, foul, worldly, and divine,
Some pure and clear, some wrapped in error's pall,
But evermore the "light of love shines over all."

HERMAN rose up at dawn on the morrow, forgetting all the strange excitement which he had gone through. It had passed from his memory like a dream. He leaped out through his low window into the glad daylight, walked through his beautiful domain, heard the birds singing a blithe welcome to the morning, saw the sunshine resting upon the noble old hall, until it looked almost as if it had renewed its youth, and felt to the full the happy reality of life. All the fantastic imaginings of night had vanished with the coming of daylight.

Existence was in every way a reality to Herman Waldhof. He was the embodiment of youth in its full enjoyment of the present, keenly alive to every delight of sense, and revelling in life as a happy certainty of tangible bliss, quite distinct from the enthusiastic visions of the dreamer. He was a young man, full of health and gaiety—bound by no ties save those he chose to forge for himself—rich, though, as he had said, his wishes often outran his wealth; and until the shadow of love fell over him, Herman had never known a care. Yet his love, though it had made him more thoughtful, brought with it no real sorrow, but only those few faint doubts which nourish and strengthen like April rain. Love without such would be like the spring without showers.

Waldhof bounded through his fields, exulting in the bright day, and in his own happiness. He called his huntsmen around him, and made ready for the chase. It would serve to beguile the tedious hours until the lover could again seek the presence of his beloved. But before he set out, he rode with his companions through the street where Hilda dwelt. A goodly troop of young men they were, but there were none so noble in bearing as Herman Waldhof. He knew it, too; and, as he passed Hilda's window, he felt almost glad

that the horseman who rode beside him was the Graf von P——, a small and ungainly man, badly mounted. As Herman made his own fine charger curvet, and, doffing his hat, let the sunshine rest on his curling hair, a smile of proud delight curved his lips, for he saw through the lattice two fair eyes, which lingered not on the Graf von P——, but on himself.

"I wonder," thought the young man, "how I appear to-day in Hilda's eyes?"

As the idea crossed his mind, it seemed that his steed dashed wildly along, confusing all his faculties, as, with the motion caused by passing swiftly through the air, his eyes grew dazzled, and he hardly knew what affected him, until he woke out of a kind of stupor. He felt himself floating through the air as one does in dreams; but his personal identity was gone. He glided along as bodiless as a winged thought, and yet he clearly distinguished every thing around him as when he had been gifted with corporeal senses. He was floating amidst the trees of a wild forest, he heard the ringing music of the horn, and beneath him galloped a troop of gay huntsmen. One among them was remarkable for personal beauty and agility. He sat his steed with the grace and firmness of a young Greek warrior, and his joyous laugh resounded through the forest as if he had been the light-hearted Actæon of old. In this youth, so apparently happy, so beautiful in person, the hovering spirit of Herman Waldhof recognised himself. His wish had been attained.

Like a cloud in the air the Shadow floated over the merry troop, and followed them through the glades of the forest. It beheld its corporeal self—the man who was Herman Waldhof—gliding near; it scanned his features with keen inquiry. They were as perfect in form as the mirror had always reflected them; but now, when agitated by the play of expression, there was a vague deficiency—a want of that inexpressible charm which sometimes makes the most ordinary face enchanting by the inward beauty of the mind. Herman's beautiful features were as unchangeable in their expression as those of the Apollo Belvidere—if you sought anything beyond you might as well seek it in a marble statue. The Shadow into which a portion of the young man's soul had fled retained enough of mortal nature to feel this want and deplore it, and turned its observation to other qualities of its second self.

Most noble was the bearing of the young huntsman, but still an unprejudiced eye might distinguish in his manly form too much of strength and too little of grace. He was an incipient Hercules, who might become in middle age anything but lithe and active. Winning he was in manner, and yet, both in that and in his tone of voice, the attendant phantom distinguished an occasional harshness, that in an inferior would have been most unpleasing, but which was disregarded in the wealthy and fascinating Herman Waldhof. His companions treated him like a privileged person, bore with his haughtiness, and laughed at his jests, even when directed against themselves.

"We shall find no game to-day," said Herman, while a shade of annoyance was perceptible in his tone.

"You have driven it far into the inner forest with your constant hunts, Waldhof," answered one of the young men. "Truly all we huntsmen ought to be very grateful for a whole year's amusement at your cost."

"Oh, 'tis nothing," returned Herman. "I love the chase, therefore I follow it. With plenty of horses, and every other appurtenance, I can oblige my friends and please myself with their society at the same time. By the by, Von P——, why did you not go to my stable? My grooms would have better provided you than with that sorry steed of yours."

The Graf von P—— turned crimson with vexation.

"A poor nobleman is sometimes worse off than a rich commoner, but he is not the less proud. With all thanks for his courtesy, Herr Waldhof will excuse my preferring my own horse."

"Just as you like," answered the young man carelessly, to ally unconscious of the pain he had caused; but the Shadow of his being saw in that passing incident ostentation, for which the open-handed generosity of youth could not atone, and a thoughtlessness of others, which showed selfishness lurking in the depths of an otherwise frank and kindly nature. A superficial observer might not notice these things, but one who could read the inner foldings of the human heart would at once recognise them as blemishes in the character of Herman Waldhof.

The young huntsmen rode merrily on, and the prey was found. Now all the ardour of the chase began. Exulting in his dauntless

courage, Herman was the foremost in all dangerous exploits. His eyes flashed, his colour heightened, and his voice rang out in wild enthusiasm. More than once he dashed between the enraged boar and one of the assailants, thereby perilling his own life and preserving that of another fellow-creature. And then they all cried how generous, how heroic, was the young Herman Waldhof; and the dim Shadow which followed him rejoiced triumphantly at the cries of delight that rose up in praise of its other self.

The hunted boar turned at bay, and the crisis of the sport arrived. All drew back, and left the master of the chase to perform the crowning exploit. It was an honour which Herman had ever claimed as a right. He glanced proudly round and spurred his horse, poising his spear with a firm bold hand. But, in a moment, another horseman dashed forward, and, despatching the wild beast, turned exultingly to claim the final honours of the chase. It was the Graf von P——!

Instantly the beaming face of Herman was darkened by a thunder-cloud of anger, until the features that were before so beautiful grew almost hideous in their wrathful disdain. He was about to plunge his horse forward with his reeking spear—not directed against the dead boar, but the living man—had not a murmur from the other huntsmen arrested him.

"It was not right of Von P——!" "Herman should have slain the boar!" said various of his friends.

"Have I done aught to anger Herr Waldhof?" observed the surprised nobleman.

"You have insulted me!" angrily exclaimed his rival. "I am the lord of the forest; it is my place, not yours, to despatch the beast. Look to yourself, my lord! Herman Waldhof is the equal of any Graf in Germany."

"I am a stranger—I know not your customs. If I have erred in courtesy, I regret it," answered the young nobleman, with an unmoved dignity that turned the tide of opinion in his favour." Herman rode homewards; and as the hovering spirit looked down upon him, it saw how evil passions had marred the fairest characteristics of Nature; and how a stranger, beholding him a prey to violent and angry feeling, would see no trace of the noble youth who had been so lately the admiration of every eye.

On his journey home the Shadow accom-

panied him, and watched the gradual dispersion of bitterness from a nature that never retained evil long. And as the hour drew nigh that was to bring him to Hilda, every trace of wrathful emotion was swept away under the soothing influence of his love. He thought of Hilda—he closed his eyes, and called up her dear face to his memory—he imagined how she would welcome him, what he should say to her, and what she would answer; and in these delicious love-reveries his mind grew calm, and an inexpressible sweetness became diffused over his face; and when the shadowy Self followed him to the presence of his love, it exulted over his grace and beauty.

Hilda was not, like her lover, perfect in form and face. A passing eye might have overlooked her, but those who loved her thought her most fair, and all who knew her loved her. A painter would have adored her soft brown eyes and lovely hair; and a musician would have said her voice was the sweetest in the world; and yet neither might have called Hilda beautiful. It was the atmosphere of love and purity in which she moved, investing all her looks, words, and deeds, with an irresistible charm, that made her the ideal of perfect womanhood.

She rose up and welcomed her lover—in her heart of hearts she knew that he *was* her lover, though no formal words had passed between them. Yet with a maidenly reserve she shut up in her heart the secret consciousness which made its chiefest joy. Herman thought her tone was cold—that her hand touched his with a careless pressure; he did not know that, at the sound of his horse's approach, a few moments before, those little hands had been pressed wildly upon the throbbing heart, and then spread over the fair blushing face, that would fain hide, even from the cold walls, its smile of radiant happiness.

Herman came and sat by his beloved; the ever-attendant Shadow watched him, as he talked in a tone so low and gentle, ever looking in her face with those beautiful eyes—truly it was no marvel that Hilda loved him. He spoke of common things, of his day's sport, and then, with a frankness that showed in a golden light all the higher qualities of his nature, he confessed to Hilda the incident which had annoyed him. Perhaps mingled with this sincerity was a consciousness that the story would come best from his own lips, and that Hilda would seek to palliate a fault so

candidly acknowledged, thus restoring him to his own good opinion, which he had well-nigh lost.

But Hilda listened without a word of praise or extenuation. She could not trust her voice with such, lest it should betray the love that was so nigh overflowing, and yet had no warrant for its utterance. And perhaps, too, she felt a woman's pain that a shadow of error should dim the brightness of her idol.

"I have heard of this before," she said.

"Who told you? Who dared speak ill of me to you?" cried the young man, and the dark cloud of anger again came over him. The Shadow saw, and fled back troubled.

Hilda lifted her eyes to his with a look of pained surprise, mingled with reproach. "We will talk no more of this," she answered, gently.

Her look and tone calmed her lover in a moment.

"Do not chide me, fair and dear maiden," replied he. "I was in error, perhaps not so much as they say and as you imagine, but still I am willing to acknowledge aught that you please."

His words were humble, but there was pride in their tone, as if he expected them to be contradicted immediately; but this the truthful spirit of the young girl would not do. She loved him well; and love, which made all his good qualities shine, in her eyes, with double lustre, rendered her proportionately quick-sighted to his failings.

"Herr Waldhof," said Hilda, gravely, "I ask no confession if caused alone by your *friendship*"—the innocent hypocrisy of those dear lips!—"your friendship for me. It was not right of you to be so angry with the Graf von P——, who meant you no disrespect. Besides, as your friend, he——"

"*My* friend! the poor cowardly creature *my* friend! Say your own, Lady Hilda, if so you mean!" cried the lover, hardly suppressing his jealous indignation.

Hilda's womanly pride was roused.

"As you will," she answered, with a quivering lip and heightened colour. "I am not used to discussions so warm as this, therefore, Herr Waldhof, I will bid you adieu, as I believe my father desires your presence."

She lightly touched the hand which, in his mortification, the young man scarcely held out to her, and, with a step of maidenly dignity, glided from the room.

With a sense of the deepest abasement the shadowy presence looked down upon its other

self, as the young man paced the room in violent emotion, raving against Hilda, his rival, and the whole world.

"She loves me not! she scorns me! she speaks in behalf of the wretch, Von P——!" he muttered. "Not one gentle feeling is in her heart for me, or she would not have spoken thus!"

Oh, self-deceiver, blinded by anger! could thine eye but have pierced into the next chamber, and seen that weeping girl who passed from thee but now with so firm a step; couldst thou have known the anguish that came with the discovery of one fault in thee, and yet the love which would fain wash it all away with pardoning tears, and defend thee against the whole world!

Herman leaped on his horse, nor stayed his frantic speed until he reached his own home. He locked himself up in his chamber, and sank down exhausted. Long he remained in a state which seemed half-sleeping, half-waking, until the morning birds aroused him. Then the whole charm was dispelled; the events of yesterday returned vividly to his memory: he became conscious of the double existence which had then been his, and knew—oh, with what bitterness came the knowledge!—that he had beheld himself!

CHAPTER III.

Lo, ye have souls immortal and sublime
To be made infinite in love and light,
And heavenly knowledge, if ye will but ope
The inner fountains, and the inner eyes,
And see the deep and full significance,
The worth and wherefore of the life of man.

C. Mackay.

LEUTHOLD watched from the window of the small room where he slept, ate, and studied, the merry troop of huntsmen go by. He saw, loftiest among them, the graceful head of his friend Herman. The clanging of the hoofs in the street below had disturbed him from his studies; and as he closed the window and turned away from the sunshine, the glittering dresses, and the sound of gay voices, the darkness and solitude of his own poor chamber struck him mournfully. He leant his forehead against his open book, and tried to shut out from his view alike the brightness without and the gloom within—both were equally painful.

"How happy they seem! how gay!" thought the young man with sadness. "And I? — Well, let me calmly think what I am, and what I would fain be. Would I change

with them?—become noble, and handsome, and rich as they; have no care but for the pleasures of life? Ah, but age will come; the strong limbs will grow feeble; the gay spirit become soured; the mind sink to a mere animal existence. Would I change with them, then? No!"

And the student strove to cheer himself with the consciousness of the high aim of life. He remembered that man's godlike mind is not given him to be cast aside like a useless thing, nor is he created to waste his existence in the passing pursuit of pleasure. Leuthold grew clearer while he pondered; he looked around on the dear companions of his loneliness—precious, though silent—his beloved books; and he envied not Herman Waldhof himself, save for that most priceless treasure, which the student would have died to gain—Hilda's love.

"How noble he looked as he passed her window!" thought Leuthold. "How dare I compare myself to him!" and the student looked mournfully down upon his own slight meagre limbs and thin hands. "Oh, that I could die—that I could lose the memory of this bitter hopeless love!" he cried, as, bowing his head upon his knees, and forgetting his manhood, he gave way to the weakness of a nature which resembled a woman's in sensitiveness, and sobbed as in his childish days.

With the reaction of his feelings the young man grew calmer. "I will be patient—I will endure," continued he, pursuing the train of his thoughts. "The sunshine of life is not for me; I must train my spirit to live content in its shade. Why murmur, poor heart! the future will but be as the past. From my cradle life has been a solitude. I have never known the joy of being beloved!" But while Leuthold uttered this, a remorseful pang touched his heart, and a faint spirit-like voice seemed to fall on his ear,—“My son, my son, hast thou, then, forgotten me?”

The student threw himself on his knees, and cried,—“Forgive me, oh, my mother, if this wild love for a moment shuts out the memory of thine! Pure and angelic spirit, comfort me now!” He clasped a crucifix, and remained muttering the customary devotions of a religion in which even the depths of his philosophical learning had not shaken his belief—it was too near his heart for any mere powers of intellect to overthrow it. Gradually a numbness oppressed his faculties; the realities around him faded into shadows, un-

til he seemed to wake at last, like one who, dreaming, dreams he is roused from a dream. In that moment, the mysterious change for which he had longed passed over Leuthold; his spirit became divided, and beheld its bodily Self.

The form which engarmented that pure and noble soul was not beautiful. The Shadow looked down upon Leuthold as he knelt, and thought how mean was the figure of the student—diminutive, stooping, though not actually deformed. The face was sallow, without a ray of colour; the features irregular, and, when in repose, ordinary and inexpressive. The sole redeeming portions of the face were a high broad forehead, and large, soft, grey eyes, shaded by lashes as long and silken as a woman's. But it could not be denied that, as he appeared now, not the least trace of personal beauty did the student possess.

Leuthold rose up, put aside his books, and went out into the streets of Leipsic. The invisible Shadow followed him, and watched him as he moved. His slight low figure would have passed unnoticed through the crowd of a great city, but here, in Leipsic, which was for ages the stronghold of learning, there were many to whom Leuthold Auerbach was known, as one whose wisdom surpassed his years. Not a few, both of the old, whose companionship he sought, and the young, who came to him for instruction, doffed their hats as he passed. The pleasant smile of recognition lighted up his face, and the Shadow saw that his step grew firmer, and even his stature seemed to rise, with a consciousness that he was respected by those whose respect was grateful to him.

He went on to the great hall of Leipsic, where students and professors were accustomed to meet for discussion, and to give and receive instruction. It was a high day, and within those walls were collected many of the learned from all parts of Germany. As Leuthold passed through the division where sat the younger of the company, many of them his own pupils, he heard a murmur of respectful congratulation. His eye brightened, and his lips relaxed into a smile almost as bright as Herman's. The Spirit looked and felt—phantom as it was—as if a sunbeam of gladness had shot through its being.

"We have been looking for you, Herr Auerbach," said one of the young men. "The great doctor from Cologne has mentioned you with praise; and our professor has chosen

you to deliver the harangue, as being the most learned of the students of Leipsic."

Leuthold's cheek flushed with pleasure; and he walked with a dignified step to the upper end of the hall, where the learned conclave awaited him. There he heard that the fame of Leuthold of Leipsic had reached to distant cities. Many, whose heads were white with long years of study, came forward to hold in friendly grasp the hand of the young man. He, in self-possessed yet modest humility, which gave a gracefulness to his whole deportment, received congratulations and praise.

"They told me I should see a plain common-looking youth," whispered the great *savant* of Cologne. "I do not find him so. His manner is dignified yet retiring; his countenance beams with intellect."

"You are right. He has the beauty of a noble mind. I am proud of my pupil," answered the professor, who was Hilda's father.

The Shadow heard, and its airy essence thrilled with joy.

Now from amidst the crowded assembly rose the voice of Leuthold Auerbach. It was low and tremulous at first, as if oppressed by the dead silence around; but as the speaker advanced it became firm. Already we have said that Leuthold possessed that irresistible charm—a low, clear, and melodious voice, that steals into the heart and carries it away captive at its will. These exquisite tones were now like music, accompanying the deep wisdom which they uttered. Leuthold was not an impassioned orator; with him all feelings lay deep, giving an outward calmness to all he said and did; and, therefore, his words now were more those of a sage who reasoned for a great truth, than of a young man who poured forth his emotions in flowery eloquence. But the clearness and earnestness of his own mind communicated itself to his speech, and to the heart as well as to the intellect of the multitude, who listened, as it were, with the ears of one man. When he concluded, first a deep silence—more expressive than applause—and then a shout of congratulation that made the hall re-echo, proclaimed the triumph of the student.

Almost overpowered, Leuthold sank back, and his friends crowded round him. Foremost among them was the learned professor, who had been his teacher in the days of his early youth.

"You must come home with me to-day,"

said the kindly old man. "Hilda will rejoice to hear of your success."

The Shadow looked down upon itself, and saw that Leuthold's face glowed with rapture, and his very lips trembled with emotion.

"I am weary now, my kind master," answered he, taking the professor's hand affectionately; "but I will come to-night—yes! tell *her* I will come to-night," he repeated, almost unconsciously.

Still under the influence of the joy which gave beauty to his whole appearance, Leuthold took his way homeward. He sat a long time in his quiet room—it hardly looked so lonely as it had done in the morning, and he himself appeared no longer the pale and drooping student, who had knelt in despair before the crucifix. He rested his head on his hand, and the Phantom, who was ever present, watched. Now and then smiles came and went over his face, and kindled it with joy. As the day wore on he heard the troop of huntsmen go by on their return; but they gave him no pain; he did not even move to look at them. When evening came he wrapped himself in his cloak, and went out to visit Hilda. Ere he reached the door a horseman galloped furiously past him. Leuthold turned, and saw that it was Herman, his dark hair flying in the wind, and his whole mien disordered.

"Poor Herman! he is annoyed; perhaps he has been unsuccessful at the chase, in which he delights so much," thought the student; and, in his simple and gentle nature, Leuthold almost reproached himself for being happy while his friend was not so. But he remembered Herman no longer when he entered Hilda's dwelling.

It was a small pleasant chamber, into which he passed; how well he knew every nook of it! There, night after night, in the long winter evenings, the motherless lonely youth had been made welcome by his kind old master; and the little Hilda had joyfully welcomed a playfellow who was so much gentler than her own wild brothers. There, as years went on, the young man had listened to the evening instructions of the professor, while Hilda, now growing womanly and reserved, but kind and sisterly still, sat by. Leuthold glanced lovingly towards the corner where she used to work, the lamp shining on her smooth brown hair, and her quick-moving fingers. Oh, how happy were those days! Musing thus, the student waited for the entrance of his beloved.

Hilda came at last. She met him cordially, took his hand in both hers—the poor Leuthold, how he trembled at the touch!—and told him how glad she was of his triumph that day.

"My father is proud of you, Leuthold; we are all proud of you. You must not forget us when you are a great man!" said Hilda, with a frank and pleasant smile.

The student looked at her with his whole soul in his eyes—those beautiful soft eyes! He leaned over her as she sat, and became absorbed in the bliss of her presence. They talked, as they always did, of things that both loved, of all that was beautiful in the world and in life; she with the open-hearted kindness of her nature, as conversing with a dear friend; and he, drinking in love ineffable from her every word and look. The Shadow hovered over him, and perceived how that the magic of love gave new music to his sweet voice, and new eloquence to his tongue. How it lighted up his face, and made his homely features almost divine with the radiance of a commanding intellect, and a heart full of all that is pure and good in man. The spirit beheld, and gloried in itself.

Hilda talked to Leuthold with the kindly earnestness of a heart which had nothing to conceal—alas for him, not even the sweet secret of love! She praised him, she spoke of his coming career of fame, and, more glorious still than fame, the proud delight of a life spent in the soul's true vocation—that of adding to the wisdom of past ages, and of lighting one's own lamp, be it great or small, that future generations may grow wiser and better through its guiding radiance.

"You are gentle as well as wise, Leuthold," said the maiden. "You will go through life happy and beloved. All is well with you."

Her voice had a softened tone, almost sad; and her whole manner was subdued—it might be that, while speaking to Leuthold, she thought of one still dearer. The student was deceived by her kind words, the tremulousness of her voice, the sudden changing of her cheek, her troubled and anxious air. He believed—oh, the madness of the dream!—that there was yet hope for him, that in time he might be loved even as he loved.

He mentioned Herman; but she who in happiness would have blushed and trembled at the chance hearing of the beloved name, now in her sorrow could listen to it unmoved. No outward sign of love for his rival came to dim the young man's hope.

"I saw Waldhof on my way hither, and thought he would have been with you to-night," continued Leuthold.

"He came, but soon departed," said Hilda, calmly; and the student dared ask no more. Could it be that Herman Waldhof had returned an unsuccessful wooer? And if so, why? The bare idea made the heart of him who loved so madly throb with added violence. He was too noble to rejoice at the sorrow of his friend; and yet human nature is weak, and Love is a king who conquers all other feelings. That Hilda should be free—that he might dare to seek her love! The thought overpowered him; and, as the Shadow of his soul read all these conflicting feelings in the face of the student, it became troubled likewise.

"What ails thee, Leuthold?" said Hilda, kindly, as she lifted her calm eyes to his agitated countenance. "Thy hand is burning, too! and the touch of her soft cool fingers thrilled to his heart. "Dear friend," she added, "I must send thee away. Go home and sleep—this day's happiness is too much for thee."

"It is—it is too much," passionately cried the student. He dared not trust himself with another word or look, but, bidding Hilda adieu, he went out.

In the cool night, beneath the quiet stars, the frenzy passed away; a soft dreaminess overpowered him, and the spell was ended. Leuthold knew that his desire had been fulfilled; and clearly and distinctly he remembered all that the Shadow had beheld. The knowledge gave him no false pride; but a delicious consciousness of what he was himself and how he was regarded by others, crept into his heart, and imparted to it courage, and firmness, and peace. The timid self-abased student now knew himself, and became strong.

CHAPTER IV.

Sorrow, there seemeth more of thee in life
Than we can bear, and live; and yet we bear.

Lowell.

What is good for a bootless bene?

Wordsworth.

READER, hast thou ever known one of those happy moments when the soul suddenly passes out of darkness into light—when, after wearily walking in gloom, the sun of some long-shrouded joy gleams through the mist, and thy tears are dried up, like dew-drops in the morning. Life becomes pleasant to thee—

all things look beautiful in thine eyes, as in those of a blind man who has just received sight; thou rememberest no more the time of darkness, but goest forth rejoicing in the un-hoped-for light.

Thus it was with Leuthold, when at sunrise he awoke. Oh, how sweet was the waking! First, there came the dim memory of some happiness, new and strange, and then a name was on his lips. The remembrance of his love—day by day his earliest waking thought—came upon him with a full tide of recollection. But there was a change. The young man rose up and looked out on the daylight; never had it before seemed so fair. His eyes grew dim with overpowering bliss; he stretched out his arms, as if he would embrace the whole world in the fulness of his joy; he murmured the name of her he loved, adding to it those words which he had never yet dared to utter—"Mine own! mine own!"

Alas! alas! for the love that can thus deceive itself!

Leuthold went to his books, but his ideas wandered. What had philosophy to do with love? Sometimes a painful thought of Herman flitted across his mind. If Hilda loved him not, how wretched he must be!

"But he will forget it in time. Herman's love is not like mine," murmured the student. "He has many joys; I only one—but that passing all others!" And then again came Hilda's image; and the young lover gave himself up to a sweet reverie. He pictured his future life; he conjured up the vision of a home, calm, peaceful, where he might follow the pursuits he loved, and become learned and honoured among men. He thought how proudly the professor would give his daughter to one who deserved to win her; and, mingled with the idea of the old man's happiness, came that of childhood; of sweet young faces crowding round him; of fame to be reaped for them, that they might rejoice in their father's name when he was in the dust; and, above all, the image of Hilda, in wifehood, in motherhood, in still fair and still-beloved old age. How they twain would glide together through life! not living as the worldly do—as if this existence were all, but ever looking upwards together, knowing that those who are one in love, and one in heart and mind, whatever be the after destiny of the soul, will never be divided.

All day Leuthold could not drive away the blissful dream. It nestled close to his heart, and would not go; it followed him when he

went out into the busy streets ; it coloured every thing with its own rosy light. The faces he met seemed to peer into his, as if divining the secret of his happiness. Only one fear oppressed him—lest he might perchance see Herman. But the day passed and Herman came not. In the evening Leuthold went out into the open country. There he thought no prying eyes could behold his joy. Yet, even there, the clouds as they passed over him seemed to form themselves into the semblance of Hilda's face, and the little birds as they sang almost "syllabled her name." All nature to Leuthold was full of love.

As he walked dreamily along, a step overtook him, his hand was warmly grasped, and Herman stood before him.

"Why, you are sauntering like a man asleep!" said young Waldhof.

Leuthold changed colour, and looked anxiously at his friend. Herman's face was not without some traces of agitation ; but there was no sorrow there.

"I have sought for you everywhere," continued the other. "I have much to tell, Leuthold."

"Have you, too, attained your desire?" asked Leuthold, hurriedly. "Have the angels we beheld that night——"

"I dreamt a dream, but I have forgotten it now, save for what it taught me!" Oh, Leuthold, I have had a bitter lesson, but it has ended in joy—Hilda loves me!"

There are strokes so terrible, so stunning, that the heart within us seems to turn to ice, but that is all, even as Heaven's bolt sometimes slays without an outward wound. Thus it was with Leuthold. His life's hope was shattered, but no visible token betrayed his agony.

Herman drew his friend's arm within his own, and they sat down under a tree. There, with his face turned away from Leuthold, the young man told the whole story of his anger, and its punishment.

"This morning," he cried, "I knew myself as I had never known before. I was humbled to the dust. I longed to throw myself at Hilda's feet, and say—'Hate me, despise me; I deserve it. I am not worthy to look upon thee, and yet I love thee!'"

"And thou didst say so, Herman?" said the student, with a voice that was quite calm.

"Yes, best Leuthold ; my good angel was with me ; I poured out my heart before her in its shame, in its humility, and she con-

temned it not. She forgave me for my love's sake. Listen to what she said—every one of her sweet words is written on my heart. 'Thou art very thoughtless, Herman—thou art full of faults—thou art not half so gentle as Leuthold ; and yet I love thee—only thee.' And then she laid her dear arm on my neck. Why, Leuthold, how thou shiverest!"

"The wind is cold—very cold," muttered the unfortunate student.

"Then take my cloak and come—we will sit no longer here ; thou art not so strong as I," answered the other ; as with unwonted gentleness of manner he led his friend homeward. Happy love had given all his better feelings freer play.

"I sometimes think it strange that thou shouldst never have loved Hilda," said Herman, as they walked on slowly, "or that she should not have loved thee."

"Loved *me*!—me!" repeated Leuthold.

"Yes, it might have been. I was almost jealous of thee when Hilda spoke so warmly of thee this morning, and I told her so. But she only smiled, and said thou hadst never dreamed of such a thing—that thou wert as a brother to her, and hadst never loved aught except thy books. But the time will come, Leuthold—Hilda says so—and thou, too, wilt know the bliss of happy love. Thou shouldst have heard her praise thee, ay, even beyond me. And then she described the sort of damsel that would win thy hard heart—beautiful as an angel, gentle as a dove. Ha ! ha ! Leuthold, dost hear?" laughed the gay-hearted young man.

Leuthold laughed too. So strong was the control he had over himself, that the keenest ear could not have distinguished a discordant tone in that terrible mirth. The darkness hid the convulsions of his features, the fierce clench of his hands, the torturing pain that seemed as if a fiend's clutch were at his throat ; and Leuthold conquered. But angels would have looked down and wept over him, who struggled so fearfully with himself that, in the contest, life was almost riven asunder. At his own door the student parted from Herman kindly, cheerfully, as usual ; and he listened to the careless footstep of the young man as he passed down the street, humming a light ditty, half-playful, half-tender, for it was of love. The sounds died away, and Leuthold was alone.

Let us not depict the anguish of that first hour of terrible awakening from the dream of a lifetime. They to whom love is but the

crowning link of many sweet bonds, the last nectar-drop in a cup already running over with all life's other blessings, can never know what it is to those who have nought else. Such love—the love of years—is not merely the chief aim of life; it is life itself. What must the rending be? We cannot paint—we dare not! God help those who have thus lost all!

A night of agony passed, and Leuthold had striven with his own soul, until he had taught it that most blessed of lessons—to endure. In the silence and gloom a spirit-hand had been laid upon his heart, and its wild beatings grew still. A spirit-voice had breathed in his ear, “Peace, peace! others, too, have suffered, and found rest.” Then Leuthold answered in his soul,—“Yes, I know, in the grave.” But the voice replied, solemnly and reproachfully,—“And in life, too, there is peace. Thinkest thou that the All-good would send His children on earth for cureless sorrow? There is no grief so heavy that it cannot be borne, until patience becomes in the end calmness and peace.” And the gnawing pain in the student's heart ceased; he grovelled no longer on the floor of his chamber, wrestling with his despair, but looked upward to the sky. It was still and clear, but all starless; and Leuthold thought it was an image of his own soul. As he looked, the horizon brightened, and he saw with his tearless burning eyes the coming dawn. Then he knew that there is no night so long and dreary but that morning will come at last. The fountains of his heart were unsealed—tears came, and they soothed him. He lay down, and slept a sleep as calm as if angels watched around his pillow. It might have been so—who knows?

While many of the dwellers in Leipsic were yet sleeping, Leuthold Auerbach went forth from his native town, as he willed, for ever! He left kindly tokens for all whom he regarded; but he bade farewell to none. No one knew of his going until he had departed; and he gave no clue as to whither he was journeying. Perhaps he hardly knew himself; but he felt that he could not stay at Leipsic. A restless desire for wandering took possession of him. He seemed as though he could not breathe until he had shut out from his eyes, and heart, and mind, those scenes where he had been so happy, and so wretched—until he had placed the wide world between him and his lost hope.

As before said, he went away without one

adieu even to Hilda. He could not look again upon her beloved face, knowing that all hope was shut out from him for ever. Against his reason—almost against his conviction, one faint ray of hope had clung to his heart during these long years of hidden love; all was dark now. Ere long he knew that the total cessation of a flickering hope is easier to bear, at least, after a time; but this he had yet to learn. Now, his only strength seemed to consist in flying far away from the spectre of a vanished joy.

Leuthold passed by the dwelling of Hilda, and his heart melted. In all his agony mingled no anger against *her*. She loved him not, but she had not deceived him; he had beguiled himself. She was still the angel of his life, the unconscious origin of all that was pure and good in his nature, the awakener of his soul. Therein, amidst all its gloom, her image shone unclouded still. In the lonely and still sunshine of early morning, Leuthold stood by her garden-gate; he pressed his lips to the cold stone where her hand had often rested in their many adieux, and prayed that she might be blessed through life, and happy in the love of him she had chosen.

While he lingered, he heard the trees rustling in the garden; a light footstep sounded along the concealed walks; and a low voice, that seemed to come from a heart overladen with its own happiness, murmured, rather than sang, these words:—

I rest—I rest,
With a joyful heart;
Of peace possess'd,
With dear love blest.
The tears are dried that were fain to start.
I rest—I rest.
The sky is clear,
And the storms are gone;
A star of cheer,
So fair, so dear,
Shines on me sweetly when I am alone.
I rest—I rest.

It was Hilda's voice, pouring forth from a full heart its new and delicious bliss. Leuthold could bear no more; he fled away,—far, far, as if his feet were winged. The dream of his youth was ended for ever.

CHAPTER V.

Look not mournfully into the Past; it returns no more.
Wisely improve the Present; and go forth into the shadowy
Future without fear, and with a manly heart.
Longfellow.

THE high mass of Easter was being celebrated in Haarlem Cathedral. The deep-

toned organ poured forth its volume of sound, the censers gave out their incense, and the priests murmured the low monotonous prayers of a religion whose mysterious beauty appeals to the heart, if not to the understanding. The cathedral was filled with kneeling worshippers of every rank. The rude boor from the Dutch marshes, but a few degrees superior to his barbarian ancestor, of whom the refined Tacitus scornfully writes; the rich citizen of Haarlem, who, contented with his wealth and ignorance, left the duties of religion and learning alike to the priests of his faith,—a faith which he professed, but never attempted to comprehend,—were both there; and, lastly, there were chance wanderers from all parts, who had come to witness the Easter celebration, and to hear the great organ of Haarlem.

Of all that worshipping crowd we shall particularise but two individuals, who knelt side by side, though chance alone had caused their propinquity, as they were perfect strangers to each other. One was far advanced in life, with calm, phlegmatic, Dutch features, only redeemed from dulness by the acute expression of a quick dark eye; he wore a burgher's dress, goodly enough, and carefully arranged. Beside him knelt the other,—a man, whose age might have been within the middle cycle of life—from thirty to fifty. He had a dark bronzed countenance, remarkable neither for beauty nor ugliness; hair, in which white streaks already had begun to mingle with the brown, and a stooping gait. His careless but not coarse attire, was travel-worn, and he worshipped like Jacob, “leaning on the top of his staff,”—one which had evidently sustained the wayfarer's steps through many a weary journey. He rested his hands upon it, as he knelt, leaned his head against them, and seemed absorbed in thought. His musings were hardly devotional, for he fixed his large soft eyes on vacancy, and his compressed lips did not move, though all around him were heard the murmuring orisons of his fellow-worshippers.

When the sacred host was raised the stranger's open eyes were still fixed upward; he declined not his head; his neighbour touched his elbow, whispering,—

“My good friend, thou art absorbed! thou forgettest thy prayers.”

The other turned hastily round, looked at the old burgher's kindly face, and, with a murmured apology or acknowledgment, bent his head like the rest, until the holy emblem

had passed by. When the service concluded, the old man said to his fellow-worshipper,—

“I pray you pardon me for breaking in upon your thoughts just now; but it behoves all good Catholics to be doubly careful of every due rite, when these sinful doctrines of the man John Huss are abroad.”

“I am beholden to you,” answered the stranger, in a sweet musical voice. It was the same which, years before, rang with persuasive eloquence in the hall of Leipsic, had murmured its words of concealed love at Hilda's side, had poured forth, in secret, its agony of wild despair. The stranger in the cathedral of Haarlem was Leuthold Auerbach,

Touched and interested—unconsciously, perhaps—by the melody of a voice whose tone was irresistible, the old man, as they went out together, still continued his conversation.

“You seem a stranger here?”

“I entered Haarlem only yesterday.”

“And you were admiring our cathedral? Is it not beautiful?” said the old man, with some degree of pride.

“It is the fairest I have yet seen, and I have travelled far and wide, and have found no rest for my feet,” continued Leuthold, musingly, while a sad look passed over his face, not unmarked by his companion.

“Forgive an old man's rudeness,” said the Dutchman, kindly; “but you seem weary, my friend; and if you are a stranger, and have no home—no ties in Haarlem——”

“None in the wide world!”

“Why, then, come home and stay with me, while your affairs keep you here. Ours is a cheerful house; my Lucia will be sure to welcome her father's guest; and I have half-a-dozen grandchildren, who will strive to amuse you. You might fare worse than in the home of old Laurentius Coster.”

Leuthold met this unexpected hospitality with the cordiality it merited, and accepted the offer.

“But, Herr Coster,” he said, smiling, “are you not rather venturesome in thus welcoming a stranger to your house?”

“I know not who you may be, whether rich or poor, noble or peasant,” answered the hearty burgher. “I only need look in your face to see you are a good man, and that is all I care for. You are most welcome, provided you are not one of those abominable heretics.”

Leuthold drew a crucifix from his bosom.

“I am a good Catholic, I trust,” he said, “but I am no rich noble. I was once a stu-

dent, and am still a humble follower of the learned sciences. My name is Leuthold Auerbach."

"Then welcome—thrice welcome!" cried Laurentius, grasping him warmly by the hand. "I am a simple unlearned man, myself, but I have been honoured with the friendship of many who were renowned in the world; and your name is known to me as that of one whom a prince might be proud to welcome to his palace. Thrice welcome to my home, Herr Auerbach!"

Leuthold's breast thrilled with pleasure. The yearning desire for human sympathy yet dwelt there, and ever sprang up at the lightest touch, a pure fountain of love for all mankind. He had said to himself when, after the desolation that fell upon him, his heart revived a little, as a way-side plant, crushed by a heavy stone, after a time begins to put forth its small green leaves from amidst the ruins,—he had said, "I will be strong, I will be patient. The world is very wide. I will not mourn for the loss of one all-engrossing love, but will open my heart to all earth's children. It shall not be frozen by this despair, but shall abound the more in pure, unselfish, universal love—in divine charity."

And so he had wandered far and wide, in desert places, and among men whose very existence was unknown to civilised Europe. He had gone from the learned priests of Rome to the wild mountaineers of Hungary, and then again to the scarcely less barbarian inhabitants of the nooks and corners of his own land. He had journeyed from city to city, everywhere following on the track of misery, with the blessed footsteps of an angel of peace, regarding his learning only so far as it was an instrument of doing good. To the sick he was a physician; to the poor a comforter and adviser; to the guilty he spoke with a warning yet tender voice. When all these blessed him, when in their happiness he saw the fruit of his labours, then Leuthold remembered no more his own sorrow, but rejoiced that he was thus made an instrument of good on earth.

Laurentius and his guest took their way to the home of the former. As they went, Coster talked with the not unpleasing garrulousness of his age; and Leuthold learned much of his new friend's early life. His father had been *custos* of the cathedral; and this office, after the fashion of those early times, had given to the family their surname. Laurentius recounted to his guest the passing incidents of

a life whose course had been untroubled by any of those seasons of worldly care and mental suffering, which often stand as landmarks of bitterness in the history of finer-moulded spirits. He had loved, as all men do, each in his different way; he had married, and outlived his joy; he had lost his wife, and had outlived his sorrow. He spoke with a father's fondness of his only child, Lucia, who, with her husband and children, brightened his home in his old age.

"I have had a quiet easy life, and have done as much good as my opportunities permitted," said the old man. "Last of all, I am content that my children should lay me in the shadow of the old cathedral towers, say a prayer for my soul, and forget me."

"And is this life? Is this all?" thought Leuthold, while he listened. "Have I no higher existence than this?" And his inmost soul answered,—"Yes, thou hast the true life within thee!" He felt it, and was content. "Yet," he murmured, "there is none on earth even to say the prayer of loving kindred for my soul's repose." But the inward voice replied,—"What matters it? if thou hast worked out thy mission on earth, thy good deeds, although unknown and scattered wide, will be as wings to lift thy soul to paradise."

The two companions came to the dwelling of Laurentius Coster. It was situated on the shores of the lake of Haarlem, whose waters dashed up almost to the entrance, fertilising a pleasant garden, which owed its beauty more to the hand of abundant Nature than to the tasteful skill of its cultivator. The house was evidently occupied by a family whose wealth enabled them to consider luxury a necessity, inasmuch as the window of the large hall was of glass, while the other apertures for light were carefully covered with a thin wire-woven substance. Moreover, it had one tall chimney in the centre of the roof, above which the dense wood-smoke curled upwards, diffusing the pleasant odour of burning pine-fagots; and the roughness of the outer walls was concealed by festoons of ivy, which had been gracefully trained so as to cover the whole front of the low one-storied dwelling.

Presently the garden rang with the welcoming shouts of a troop of children, who came bounding to meet their grandfather. The boys danced round him with innumerable greetings and inquiries about Easter-gifts; while the eldest girl—a silent demure-eyed little damsel of twelve years—quietly took

away the old man's stick, and drew his arm through hers, as a proud supporter of his steps.

"See what it is to be an old grandfather!" said Coster to Leuthold, who had hung back from the merry tribe of children. "Come, Lucia the Second," he continued, addressing his grand-daughter, "you must be mistress of the house in your mother's stead, and welcome my friend here, whom I have brought from Haarlem!"

The little maiden drooped her head, and cast down her eyes, half demurely, half with a childish coquetry; then, without lifting up her long eyelashes, she put her hand in Leuthold's, and said,—

"You are very welcome, and I hope you will stay a long time here."

"That will I gladly," answered Leuthold, as he stooped down and kissed the sweet blushing face; and then, still holding Lucia's hand, he entered the house of Laurentius with a feeling of home-happiness long unknown to the lonely wanderer.

CHAPTER VI.

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And departing leave behind us
Footsteps on the sands of time,—
Footprints that, perchance, another,
Sailing o'er Life's troubled main,
A forlorn and shipwreck'd brother,
Seeing, shall take heart again.

Longfellow.

WEEKS, months passed, and Leuthold of Leipsic still remained an honoured guest in the family of Laurentius Coster. There was a patriarchal simplicity therein which was most soothing to the mind of Leuthold. The children loved him, for he became alternately their teacher and their play-fellow; the mother—a worthy Dutch matron, to whom her home was her whole world—regarded him kindly, as a harmless gentle character, who ate little and spoke less; and the old man himself, after vainly trying to delight his own peculiar faculty of hero-worship by treating Leuthold with the cumbrous respect due to a great man, at last suffered him to remain unnoticed and untroubled with the burden of his fame, to nestle in the family nook as he best loved.

When Leuthold spoke of continuing his way and quitting this calm home, it was with a lingering and almost sorrowful tone, which was echoed by all the family. John and Peter, the two elder boys, loudly protested

against his departure; and little Lucia tearfully raised her soft dove's eyes, which had now learned to peep from under their lashes, even in the presence of Herr Auerbach.

"Do you not love us, that you wish to go?" said the child, wistfully. "You know that we love you,—I more than all. Why will you not stay?"

It is so sweet to hear the language of affection, even from a child. Leuthold's eyes grew dim, while he took the gentle pleader on his knee and repeated,—

"You love me, dear child! Does any one, then, love me?"

"After such a frank declaration from this young damsel, what more can you wish?" said the grandfather, merrily. "But come, Herr Auerbach, tell me whither you would go, and whom it is that you prefer to us? I thought you had no home-ties."

"I have no closer ties in the wide world than here," answered Leuthold. "It seems to be my fortune to drift through life like a chance sea-weed, and never find a resting-place. I have been happy here, and now I go forth to fulfil my wandering destiny."

"Thou shalt not go forth at all, my son," cried the old man, his tone of respect merging into that of affection. "Listen to what this little maiden says, and stay with us. If thou art too proud to be received as a brother in a household which is honoured by thy presence, at least thou wilt not refuse to aid in governing these wild boys, who ought to esteem it their greatest happiness to have been instructed by the learned Doctor Leuthold Auerbach. Therefore stay, my son, if I may call thee so."

Leuthold clasped the hand of Coster, and the compact was sealed, without a word, save Lucia's joyful exclamation,—

"Ah, now you will believe that we love you!"

And she sat down at his feet, looking up in his face with eyes that spoke more than her words,—eyes in which a woman's soul was dawning through the unconscious innocence of the child.

"Herr Auerbach," said the eldest boy, after a long and whispered consultation, "now you are one of the family, we must put your name among our list. How do you write 'Leuthold'?"

His question being answered, the boy began to talk with his brothers.

"An L and an H," mused the younger, John,—“they will be hard to cut. Grandfa-

ther, you must do them for us, as you did in the wood."

And he brought out a large box filled with letters of all sizes rudely carved in bark, some separately, others united in long strips, forming the names of the family.

"Now you shall see how cleverly we can write without using a pen, and what a quantity we can do at a time," said Peter. "Come, dear master!" The "good master," or, the "dear master," was Leuthold's appellation in the family.

The boy led him to a sort of clothes-press, and showed him how, by placing these blackened letters under white paper, impressions were taken of the names of the household.

"We call this our printing," said the boy, proudly, as he noticed Leuthold's surprise and curiosity. "We have done all our own names, and you shall soon see yours write itself in the same way. Once we did a whole sentence,—it was, *Ave Maria, ora pro nobis*, it looked so pretty!"

"And who found out these curious playthings?" asked the good master.

"It was our grandfather who cut the first letter for us to copy out of the bark of a beech-tree, as we were walking in the wood. Then Peter took an impression of it, and we saw how it would save the trouble of writing, and be much prettier. But you do not hear, good master," said the boy, as Leuthold sat musingly with the letters in his hand, apparently absorbed in deep reflection.

In the child's plaything the man of thought and far-seeing intellect perceived, though dimly, the origin of a mighty power, which in coming ages would sway the world to its centre. He saw how learning might be scattered far and wide,—how the work of a lifetime might come to be transcribed in a day, and thus the blessing of knowledge be diffused to an extent of which he had never before dreamed. These ideas, though vague and darkly shadowed forth, yet came upon the man of science with a strength which he could feel, but not define. Perhaps there was destiny in the sudden light which appeared to flash upon Leuthold, and impelled him to work out the great idea which now filled his mind.

Laurentius Coster was one of those men who seem sent into the world, the unconscious instruments of some great good, yet never dream of their mission, and accomplish it more through seeming destiny than by the resolute agency of their own will. How little

did the simple-minded old man imagine, when cutting out playthings for his grandchildren, that he was paving the way for the glorious footsteps of Freedom, of Science, of human Wisdom, through which men may almost become as gods!—that the name which, in his unlearned humility, he deemed would soon be forgotten, was by this mysterious fate destined to be transmitted from generation to generation as that of the Inventor of Printing!

Leuthold Auerbach spent a long night of meditation, and then he sought Laurentius, and told him, with earnest enthusiasm, of what was passing in his mind. But the placid and rather phlegmatic Dutchman was perfectly unmoved. He could not believe that from a thing so trifling—a childish toy—should spring effects so great as Leuthold foretold. The master drew him to the window.

"Look," he cried, in his energy,—“look at that noble tree in whose branches the birds rest and the breezes play,—it was once a small seed trodden under foot! But a hand found it, planted it, and behold it now! So is the beginning of every new science; it is discovered—a paltry seed, and planted, sometimes intentionally, sometimes by what men foolishly call “chance;” then it takes root and grows, and none can stay it. Remember that a few grains of sand accidentally mingled and thrown into the fire by a careless workman’s hand produced the clear beautiful substance now forming your window; and who knows where the marvels of this art of glass-making may end? It makes things distinct to the eye like a new sense. Perchance, one day through it we may behold the far-off mysteries of the stars. And so it will be with this discovery of thine, Laurentius.”

“Thou art sanguine, dear Leuthold,” said the old man, with a half-incredulous but gentle smile, as he listened to the excited tones of his friend. “What good dost thou imagine this printing will produce?”

“Hast thou never considered that it will multiply writing without end?—that those rare and precious works which it takes a man’s life to copy may be made no longer the sole luxury of the rich?—that the same power by which these children print a name or a prayer could be made to produce a whole volume? Oh, Laurentius, if thou couldst see into the future as I do—see thy name emblazoned by Fame—see thy children honoured, and, above all, see the good which thou

hast left behind on earth, how blessed such a life must be!"

Coster, moved and touched by the earnestness of Leuthold, seemed more than half convinced.

"Well, dear master, what dost thou wish me to do for the furtherance of this great end? I will do all for thy sake."

"Not for mine, but thine own,—or, rather, for the sake of the whole world!" cried the enthusiastic Leuthold.

And then he explained to his surprised and wondering hearer various plans which the ingenuity of a man of science could make applicable to the new invention.

"It is strange—it is wonderful!" said Laurentius, musing, as improvements, which had never struck him before, were suggested by the master; and slowly the idea began to dawn upon the good Fleming that this passing amusement of his might, indeed, turn out a wonderful discovery. He was like a man who had picked up a pebble, which some hand more skilful than his own had polished, and found therein a precious gem. Yet, like the same self-gratified seeker, he never remembered that he had only found it as a common stone, and that, for all he knew of its value, it might have remained a common stone for ever, had not a wiser head than his own brought the treasure to light.

Laurentius gave himself up to delight and pride. He was at last convinced of the after-success of his discovery, and as it steadily advanced, owing to the skilful wisdom of Leuthold, the learned of Haarlem began to see it too. Coster was now honoured as the inventor of a marvellous art, and men began to talk of him as the honest burgher had never been talked of before. When the first rudely-printed book appeared the joy of the old man knew no bounds. He looked at it, turned over and over again the coarsely-formed but still legible pages, until his aged eyes swam with tears.

"Can it be I—I, Laurentius Coster, who have done all this,—who have found out what seems like magic?" cried he.

And then he embraced his daughter, and took his grandchildren on his knee, making them spell it over letter by letter.

"My boys, my dear John and Peter, you must work out this," he said. "I am old, I shall not live to rejoice in the work of my hands; but you will see it. Yes, my children, you will! and you need not forget your old grandfather when he is gone—the world

will not let you. Ah, me! to think that my poor name should indeed be remembered for ages as having done all this! Children, you will one day be proud that you are descended from Laurentius Coster."

"Grandfather," murmured Lucia, "you are so happy with us that you forget Leuthold. See how silent and grave he stands."

"Ah, yes! come here, my dear Leuthold—my good friend," cried the old man, whose heart was opened to the whole world. "You were the first to tell me what I had done, and you shall not be forgotten. You shall share my fortune with these children, and be a rich man all your life!"

Leuthold smiled, with a gentle negative motion of the head; he then complained of weariness, and retired. In his solitude he sat, and pondered over thoughts half-pleasing, half-sad.

"It is even so," mused he. "I have laboured, and others will reap the fruit of my labours. This old man's name will be honoured, while mine will be mentioned no more. I shall pass away like a wandering breeze, or like a breaking wave. Yet what matters it? The winged breeze has left behind a precious seed—the wave has wafted a pearl ashore. The work of both is done."

CHAPTER VII.

He stood beside me,

The embodied image of the brightest dream,
That like a dawn heralds the day of Life.

The shadow of his presence made my world
A Paradise. All familiar things he touch'd,
All common words he spake, became to me
Like forms and sounds of a diviner world.

Shelley.

THE poets liken life to a hurrying river—a journey swift, and yet weary—a changing day. They call Time an enemy, a destroyer; at times a beloved friend, but that is only in the bitter irony of sorrow. The fact is, that passing Life and changing Time are only outward show. The true souls who walk the earth,—and there are some, thank God! whatever cold-hearted sceptics may say of humanity—never really change, nor grow old. They only ripen in wisdom and in all good things, and become more fit for the heavenly harvest. In those who are of commoner mould the wearing body weighs down the mind, and the heart grows old with the frame; but the true angel spirits are ever young.

Thus Leuthold Auerbach, when the dark

shadow of forty years was nigh overtaking him, was as young in heart as he had been at twenty-five. His eye yet brightened at the sight of all beautiful things; his voice had its old gentle tone; and though his figure was bent still lower, and Time—in poetical language—had laid his hand on the noble forehead and clustering hair, until every curve of the finely-formed head lay bare to the eye of the observer, still Leuthold Auerbach was not an old man. Nature, ever even-handed, sometimes atones to those whose want of beauty makes them look old in youth, by tenderly keeping off the harsher tokens of age. Had the Self-seer exercised his gift, now long unused, he would have marvelled that fifteen years should have passed over him and left so few traces behind.

The “good master”—he still kept that name—sat one day with his pupils, now growing into manhood. John and Peter were busily engaged in carving types, for all the secrets of his invention were wisely kept by Laurentius within his own family. They were the sole depositaries of the first mysteries of printing, except a servant, Geinsfleicht, who afterwards carried the secret with him to Mentz, and there promulgated it as his own discovery. The old man wandered up and down the room; now looking over the young workmen, now giving orders to his servant, who was busy with the press, and then glancing with pride and pleasure to the various testimonies of his success that adorned the room, in the shape of printed leaves.

“’Tis useless, grandfather,” at last cried John, throwing down his block, “I cannot cut these letters; and as I am the best workman here no one else can. You must get some wood-carver, and run the chance of his keeping our secret. I will be troubled no longer.”

“Ah, you were ever an impatient boy,” said the grandfather, shaking his head in despair. “Leuthold, dear master, what shall we do?”

“The boy speaks wisely, though he meant it not,” answered Leuthold, “The work is beyond his skill—it requires an experienced hand.”

“And whom among the carvers in Haarlem can we trust?—they are a wild unprincipled set, who would steal our secret and fly. Come, Lucia,” he continued, as the door opened, and a young girl entered, “thou hast more sense than either of thy brothers; tell us how we are to get this work

finished, which John has so angrily given up?”

Lucia raised her eyes with the same look which was peculiar to her in childhood; all else was changed with her. The round chubby features had become soft, but clearly defined in regular proportion. The form had reached the full height of womanhood; childish prettiness was merged into perfect beauty—beauty rendered still more lovable by the mind that shone through it. Lucia at seventeen was, indeed, the perfection of girlhood; thoughtful, serene, yet with a world of feeling, that almost amounted to passion, slumbering in the deep clear eyes, in the tremulous lips.

“I do not wonder that John could not carve this delicate work,” she said.

“Ay, that is the thing! and whom can we trust, my child? A first-rate carver would refuse the task, and of those wild young men that Peter brings here, there is not one who is honest.”

“Yes, grandfather, there is,” answered the girl. “No one can say evil of George Surlan, the wood-carver from Ulm.”

“What! merry George, the master-singer, who steals away old hearts and young with his laughing eyes and his gay songs?”

“He is good as well as merry, grandfather. I am sure you might trust him. And he is a favourite of the master’s, too,” said Lucia, for the first time lifting her eyes to Leuthold’s face.

The two boys burst into a loud laugh.

“You like George because he took your head as a model for one of his carved angels, sister. How vain girls are!” cried John, maliciously.

Lucia glanced towards the master, whose penetrating gaze was fixed on her countenance. She saw it, and blushed deeply.

“It is not so, indeed!” she murmured. “You must not think so ill of me, dear master.” And she suddenly took Leuthold’s hand with a child-like air, as if deprecating reproach.

“Lucia is never vain,” said Leuthold, gently, as he drew her towards him with the frank familiarity which ever marked his intercourse with the whole family, and smoothed her beautiful hair, as a father or elder brother might have done. It was a token of regard that was customary between them; and yet Lucia seemed to tremble and change colour, even while a smile of radiant happiness hovered round her lips.

"Merry George might have known we were talking about him," cried John, who had taken refuge at the window, in a sullen fit. "Look, there he is, coming hither! Now, grandfather, you can put him in my place, as Lucia answers for his honesty so boldly."

"What shall we do, good friend?" said the old man, irresolutely, turning to Leuthold, who was, though Laurentius never suspected the fact, the ruler of all his actions, having over him the indescribable influence of a strong mind over a weak one.

"I think," said the master, "that George would answer thy purpose, Laurentius. Lucia has spoken truly; he is a clever and honest youth, the son of a worthy father, whom I knew well. Thou mayst, indeed, trust him."

"The master is always right. I will go and fetch George hither," said Peter; and, meeting no opposition, he departed.

Presently George Surlan entered. He was a youth slenderly and gracefully made, whose bright blue eyes and sunny curling hair caused him to look much younger than he really was. His dress was that of a student, but light and gay, and he wore on his shoulder a sort of badge, being a rude representation of King David playing the harp. This was the distinctive mark of the order of Master-singers, a brotherhood which rose up in Germany after the Minne-singers had passed away, and which united the musical character of the latter with many rules and rites approaching to masonic. To this fraternity of minstrels, which included men of all ranks, and was at one time almost universal over Germany, the young wood-carver belonged.

The master-singer lifted his cap from his fair curls, and looked with much surprise round the room, which was, according to report, the scene of Coster's mysterious and secret labours. He made a respectful reverence to the old man, and to Leuthold, and then, as his quick eye caught that of the young maiden, it brightened with pleasure.

"They tell me you are a true upright youth, as well as a good carver," abruptly began Laurentius. "I have sent for you to aid us, George Surlan, and I am going to trust you with a great secret. Herr Auerbach says I may."

The young man looked gratefully towards the master, and replied,—

"He shall have no cause to repent his goodness. What can I do!"

And thereupon Laurentius began, in a long harangue, to explain the necessity of secrecy, and the solemn promise that he would be expected to make regarding the work he was to do. The master-singer listened rather impatiently; but Leuthold took advantage of a pause in the discourse to tell all succinctly.

"Thou must promise to keep the secret, and I know thou didst never fail in thy word. I answer for thee, and so does this child, it seems," said Leuthold, smiling at Lucia.

"Then I will engage to do anything in the wide world," cried George Surlan, earnestly, clasping the master's hand, though his beaming eyes sought the sweet face of Lucia.

She answered him with a frank and kindly smile; but she did not droop her long lashes—she did not blush. Alas! while the young man's whole soul was laid at her feet, as it were—while he watched her every movement with the lingering fondness that only springs from love, she looked carelessly on him, unconscious of the treasure thus thrown away. To the dreaming maiden, wholly absorbed in her inner world of romance, there was but one on earth who appeared noble, wise, worthy to be the ideal of girlhood's wildest devotion, and that one was Leuthold Auerbach.

Woman's love is far more spiritualised than man's, inasmuch as it is often entirely independent of outward beauty. A true-hearted woman's nature is full of the quality called hero-worship, and this, mingled with the all-pervading necessity of loving, causes her to be swayed irresistibly by the power of superior intellect. How many a fanciful girl has lavished a world of fondness upon some poet-idol, whom, perhaps, her eyes have never beheld, and whom yet she worships as mind worships mind, with a love which, though only ideal, needs but a touch to exalt it into the intensity of woman's devotion! How often, too, do we see some beautiful and high-minded woman pour out the whole riches of her loving heart upon one to whom Nature has given nothing but the great spell to win it all—a noble soul! She passes over all external disadvantages of age or person. She sees but the immortal spirit dwelling therein; and it is ever beautiful, ever young. Her soul is bowed down before it in joyful humility, and where she worships she loves, too, with an earnestness, intensity, and purity, which shadow dimly forth that which the angels

bear to Divinity itself. Oh, how little can men know of a love like this!

Therefore, let it not be thought strange if Leuthold had thus unconsciously awakened such deep and absorbing feelings in the heart of a young girl like Lucia. The world scoffs at the romance of girlhood. Nay, women themselves, grown aged and matronly, come in time to look back deridingly on their own young feelings, and say how idle and foolish they were once. And yet this first fresh dream, be it of love or poesy, is one of the few realities of life, not the less true because we outgrow it in time. Others treading after us again pass through that sunny region, and when we turn and see them, with their innocent romance and their single-hearted confidence, we remember our own old days, and think that there was some truth in those dreams after all.

Sweet, maidenly, and yet high-souled Lucia, with the heart of a woman and the spirit of a child, our eyes grow dim while we picture thee; how thou didst grow up like a pure lily among meaner flowers, and feel gradually the carelessness of childhood merge into the dreams of girlhood; how thou didst love to sit alone, to trace dim regions in cloudland, to listen to invisible music in the wind, to watch the stars, until they seemed mysterious eyes looking down on thee, while vague feelings of delicious sadness stole over thee, and thy tears flowed, though not for sorrow! Poor child! who didst ask of the winds, the clouds, the stars, what was the strange power that so moved thee, and understoodest not the answer that they bore,—“Maiden, it is Love!”

CHAPTER VIII.

Love is sweet,
Given or returned.—*Shelley*.

THE story of love is everywhere the same. Why should we enlarge on the passing daily events in this Flemish home of four hundred years ago? Human hearts beat now as they did then, and are alike swayed by doubts, and fears, and hopes, with love reigning above all. Thou youth of modern days, sighing in vain for some cold-hearted damsel; thou, dreaming maiden, who worshippest one above all, calling this devotion, respect, admiration—any thing but love; and thou, calm philosopher, who hast suffered and found peace, and art no more of the world, ye may see in these visions of the past but the reflex of your own hearts.

Day after day glided on, and all was outward calm in the dwelling of Laurentius Coster. The young master-singer became an inmate of the family, and all were glad of this. George Surlan brought sunshine wherever he went, with his blithe spirit and kindly heart. He was not like those moody sentimental lovers, always sighing and pining; still less was he addicted to those fantastic moods which modern poetry has made so interesting, ever changing from gloomy misanthropy to hollow mirth. Though he loved Lucia as the apple of his eye, and though as yet he loved in vain, yet he did not lose hope. It was his happiness to be near her, to render her all those kindly offices which brothers scorn. When she walked through her well-tended garden and received the daily gift of flowers, or found all sorts of beautifully-carved ornaments made her own, as if by magic, Lucia thanked her friend with a pleasant smile, never dreaming in her innocence of the love he bore her. Poor George! he tried to be contented with such a light guerdon, and consoled himself with the thought that, perhaps, Lucia was too young to love any one, and a still untouched heart might surely be won in time; but, after a season, he learned how vain was that comfort. Thus it chanced that the discovery came.

Usually, in the long winter evenings, the family gathered together in the large hall. Very solemn these meetings had used to be, while Laurentius held forth to the sleepy children on the events of his young days, intermingled with horrible modern stories of the deeds of Ziska and John Huss, whose histories had reached the good city of Haarlem with all the embellishments of a fairy tale. When Leuthold came, these stories were a little discontinued, and, in their stead, the master's low sweet voice might be heard, telling various tales of his journeyings far and wide, of good deeds done in humble homes, of noble heroism that the world knew not, of suffering endured, and wrongs overcome—all that could lead young spirits onward in the right path. At such times the little Lucia always sat at Leuthold's feet, with his hand resting on her soft curls; and, as she grew older, she still kept her place beside him. But the soft eyes were less often raised to his face, and she usually listened in silence, her fingers busied with some piece of maiden's work. Now and then, when Leuthold turned and saw her thus, a vision of the long-vanished past flitted across his mind; but when, at a

sudden pause in the tale, he saw the enthusiastic girl listening with clasped hands and heaving breast, the passing fancy vanished. Lucia was not the calm reserved Hilda. More beautiful, ten thousand times; perchance, more winning; but not that ideal of youth's love.

When, alternating with Leuthold's stories, came the fantastic lays of the young master-singer, Lucia at first did not like the change; but, gradually, as the musician's own feelings deepened, his songs took a serious tone. His mirthful ditties were transformed into the breathings of love, a lore new as pleasant to the maiden; for Leuthold, in all his histories, never touched on that one subject. How could he? So while the minstrel poured out his feelings under a thin veil, his strains touched Lucia, and she listened with an intense interest, which gave new inspiration to the master-singer.

One night George sang an old German tale:—

“There was once a young princess, whom many kings and knights wooed. It was in the ancient times of Scandinavian warfare, when the strongest arm and the fiercest spirit were highest esteemed by men. Some of her suitors brought precious furs, and laid them at her feet in token of their prowess in the chase; others came in their bright ringing armour, and showed her treasures of gold; and a few cast before her, with fierce looks, the heads of slain enemies, to be the footstool of a conqueror's bride. But the maiden turned away from all; and their love grew fierce anger, and they all joined in hate towards the king her father, and would have driven him from his throne. But there stood before the crownless king a counsellor of whom no one had dreamed,—a poor and wise man, who had dwelt in the palace all his days unnoticed and uncared for, and he said to the monarch,—

“‘My hand is feeble, and has never grasped a spear, yet I can tell the stars in their courses. My voice is low, it has never been heard in battle, yet it can teach men wisdom. My body is frail, but I have strength in my soul. Let me go forth among thy people, and teach them how to overcome the might of the enemy.’

“Then the wise man went forth, and his words were like thunders, and he ruled the hearts of men against their will, until the wrong was conquered and the land was at rest. The king said unto him,—

“‘Thou shalt have the reward which is greatest of all; thou shalt be my son, O poor wise man!’

“But the other answered,—

“‘How can it be? I am lowly in form; my youth is gone by; I have neither strength to fight, nor beauty to win love. The princess will not cast her eyes on me.’

“And he looked sorrowfully to where the throned maiden sat in her loveliness, as one would look at the sphered moon, in hopeless adoration. Then the princess came down from her seat; her breast heaved, her cheek burned, but it was not with pride; and she said softly to him,—

“‘Thou art very wise, but thou knowest not the secrets of a woman's heart. When the strong men came and laid their tributes before me, I thought of a voice that had taught me in my childhood; and I turned from them as from the warring beasts of the field. When the noble and beautiful bent before me, a face was in my sight more dear, more lovely than all, for in it shone the glorious and immortal mind! Dost thou know my heart now?’ Then the maiden laid her arms round his neck and whispered, ‘Let me love thee, thou noblest of all. If thou art poor, I will be thy riches; if thou art growing old, I will bring back thy youth. To me thou art all fair, all young; thou art my glory, my delight, my pride!’”

The minstrel paused in his song, and glanced at Lucia. She sat with her head bent forward, her quivering lips pale with emotion, and her eyes fixed with a look full of the deepest and most adoring love—not, alas, on him who sang, but on Leuthold! In another moment she had burst into tears, and fled from the room.

“Thou shouldst not sing such doleful ballads to poor simple maidens, George,” said Laurentius, reproachfully. “Doubtless the child was terrified at the horrible tales of war, and battle, and human heads as footstools. ’Tis very wrong; is it not, Leuthold?”

The master lifted up his head; he, too, had listened with a trembling riven heart to the tale of love—it had spoken to him of the mournful past. George Surlan noticed that his face was paler than ordinary, and that tears glistened on his eyelashes, and the young lover's bosom was rent with jealousy. He dashed his instrument to the floor, and went out into the garden.

“Now the boy is angry, too,” querulously cried old Laurentius. “What must be done

with these wild young spirits? Go after him, dear Leuthold, and bring him hither again."

But George would not come. The master found him walking hastily by the side of the lake. His anger had passed away, but was succeeded by sadness. It sat strangely enough on that bright face, hitherto so full of the unclouded gaiety of youth. Leuthold was touched to the heart; in a moment he penetrated the young man's love-secret; and his tone, which he had meant to make calm and severe, now grew gentle and almost tremulous in its sympathy.

"What ails thee, George?" he said, laying his hand on the master-singer's arm. "Why wert thou angry, and why art thou now so sad?"

"It is nothing—nothing," and George turned away. There would have been reproach, nay, wrath, in his look; but he met the calm earnest eyes of Leuthold, and the storm was lulled. "Leave me, good master, I will return soon."

But Leuthold still kept his hold, and spoke gently and gravely,—

"George Surlan, when I stood by thy father's death bed at Ulm, he prayed me to watch over thee, and told thee always to listen to my words. Dear George, wilt thou hear me, when I tell thee what I read in thy heart now?"

The brow of the master-singer crimsoned, but he said nothing. Leuthold went on:—

"There is a secret there. Thou art wroth at the careless words of Laurentius, because thou lovest our sweet Lucia."

"Our sweet Lucia!" repeated the young man, bitterly. "Yes, I do love Lucia—thy Lucia!"

"I have thought so—I have wished so, and I am sure she loves thee," answered Leuthold, unconscious of the other's meaning.

"Thou art very kind, good master. Why art thou so certain of the maiden's heart?"

"Does she not always smile upon thee? Did she not weep at thy song? I saw not her face, but I knew it was so. Surely she loves thee, George?"

"Oh, dear master, have pity on me; thou wilt drive me mad!" cried the other, impetuously. "Thou wert ever kind; why dost thou taunt me thus? Lucia loves me not, and thou knowest it well."

"Not so; it is impossible! Whom but thee could this timid maiden love, who has been brought up like a young bird in its hidden nest?"

"Thee—thee, Leuthold Auerbach. Lucia loves thee!"

The red blood rushed to the master's face, and then faded away into a mournful smile.

"Thou art dreaming, poor boy!" he said, gently. "Throughout life I have never known the blessing of woman's love; it was not for me; and now that I am growing old, that this fair blooming child should love one like me, seest thou not it is impossible?"

George looked amazed.

"And can it be that thou knewest it not?—that thou dost not love her?"

"I love my sweet pupil, who has been unto me like a young sister—a daughter! I never had a dream so wild as this."

"Then thou lovest another, or thou hast loved. Tell me all, dear master," eagerly cried the young man. But he imagined not the effect his words would produce on Leuthold, who staggered as if struck by a sudden blow, and leaned against a tree for support. George Surlan, terrified and awed, could not utter a word. At last the master said slowly, and with effort,—

"Speak of this no more. Let it vanish alike from thy memory and from thy tongue. It is a secret between my own heart and God. Now leave me."

The young musician, deeply touched, pressed his hand and departed. Leuthold stood alone by the shore of the gloomy lake. A thick wintry mist had crept over it; the chill penetrated every fibre of his slight delicate frame, but he felt it not. The long-slumbering feelings of human passion had once more awoken in his nature, and he trembled beneath them. His soul was an autumn tree, through whose boughs the same breezes which had once only produced pleasant music, now pass,—tearing to the earth the same leaves with which they had erst harmlessly played. The ideal of love which he had vainly set up in youth again revived in Leuthold's spirit. Not that another filled the place of her around whom he had woven that ideal, but yet his soul thrilled to the sweetness of being the object of woman's love.

The words of George Surlan, "Lucia loves thee—only thee," rang in the ears of Leuthold with a strange melody. He began to think over the words, the looks of the young maiden, since she had grown from childhood unto girlhood; her deep loving eyes rose up before him; he remembered her silent attention to all he said; her care for all things he loved,

the deep sympathy, mingled with reverence, with which she strove to teach her own mind to follow his in its wildest flights. All these things dawned upon him in a new light, with a sweetness of which he was himself hardly conscious.

Oh, ye lonely-hearted ones, into whose darkness has suddenly broken a cheering ray, on whom the unlooked-for sense of being loved has stolen like a pleasant perfume in the desert, deem him not faithless to the one only true love that the human heart can feel! Scorn him not, if in Leuthold's dreams that night the bitter memories of the past grew less keen; that the forms of Hilda, the hopelessly beloved one, and of Lucia, the young devoted dreamer, mingled into one. ❧

CHAPTER IX.

To suffer woes that Hope thinks infinite,
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night,
To love and bear, to hope till Hope create
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates,—
This is thy glory!—

Shelley.

LONG ere the twilight of a winter morning dawned Leuthold arose, and, lighting his lamp, strove to banish by study the wayward fantasies of the night. But it was in vain. A spirit had been raised within him which no such power could lay. His thoughts turned still to that vague phantom of Lucia's love which had so suddenly risen up in his imagination. To drive it away he thought of himself,—of the twenty years' barrier between that fair young maiden and the man over whom time and sorrow had laid such a heavy hand. But still the moaning wind seemed to breathe in Lucia's voice the words of that old lay,—“Let me love thee, and I will bring back thy youth.”

Again, as in a time long gone by, there came to Leuthold the wild yearning to behold himself,—to exercise the strange gift which had once so strongly influenced his life. The angel of his destiny seemed once more near him, and thoughts and feelings to which he had been unused during his life of action in the world without again thronged upon the mind of the dreamer. The Self-seer felt upon him the warning of his coming power.

“O thou angel of my fate!” cried Leuthold, “thou readest my heart,—all its weakness, all its strength. Thou seest that it is not through vain desire or selfish pride that I seek to know myself as I am. It may be

that my desolate heart shall still be gladdened and grow young in the sunshine of woman's love; a tender wife-like hand may yet smooth away the thick-gathered furrows of this faded brow; children's kisses yet rekindle the roses of these pale lips; I may live the life I pictured in youth's dreams, and die at peace in my own household! But if not, oh, let me know my own spirit and do that which is right!”

As the Self-seer, in the earnestness of his concentrated soul, prayed thus, the lamp died away and his chamber grew dark. The wind rose, and the waves of the lake under his window gave forth a hollow murmur which lulled his senses. Gradually torpor oppressed him, and he felt no more, until in the misty yet full daylight the divided soul beheld its other self, wrapped in the peaceful childlike repose into which Leuthold had sunk when the spell came upon him.

Once more, after a lapse of time which on earth would be numbered as the fourth of a man's life, the shadowy essence looked upon its bodily form—the immortal and unchangeable spirit beheld what was perishable as the flowers of the field. Even as we view a fading garment did the Presence look upon the lineaments of its earthly vesture. The face was not yet disfigured by the touch of age, because in its calm repose a childlike sweetness rested on it; but the freshness of youth was not there. Even greater than the tokens of natural decay were the signs of quick-coming decline produced by the ever-active mind. When once age came it would not be with slow crawl, but with lightning footstep.

As the low red sunbeam fell on his face, Leuthold awoke. The Shadow of his soul followed him as he descended to the general hall. His step grew firm, and a brightness was in his eye that resembled the face of the student of Leipsic in years gone by. Only a look of fear darkened it as George Surlan met the master, with a silent expressive grasp of the hand, and an affectionate inquiring gaze. As Leuthold, with a passing answer, turned away from the master-singer, the Phantom read in his troubled air the conflict that had already begun in that soul, hitherto so calm, so clear; and a painful thrill quivered through its pure and spiritual being.

When Lucia, timidly, and yet with inconceivable tenderness, took the master's hand, she was startled by the earnestness of his look. It spoke a sudden awakening to the power of her beauty, a something of reve-

rence for the woman, mingled with affection towards the child. That day she did not linger at her place by Leuthold's side, but went away to the farthest nook, though she felt that his eyes followed her even there. The Spirit saw it too, and saw also how that those clear eyes could no longer meet those of the young wood-carver, who plied his work in silence and hopeless pain.

As the day advanced Leuthold grew restless. He went to the shore of the lake and wandered about, sometimes idly watching the dusky clouds that careered over the sky in the majesty of winter's storms, and then again walking with his eyes cast down in deep meditation. The Spirit hovered over him, and listened to the voice within his soul, and which cried louder the more it was suppressed.

"My heart is still young," Leuthold murmured, "though my years are gathering fast behind me. What matters that? If Lucia loves me, why should I count my years? But then her love is the love of a child; will it endure when age comes, when my frame is shattered and my mind enfeebled, while she is still blooming and young? Shall I bind her to me, then, with chilling fetters of duty, and darken her life by uniting it with mine? Would this be a meet return for her love? No, such love is not for me; I will forget the dream."

But while he endeavoured to grow firm, the Shadow saw that the struggle threw the feebleness of added years over Leuthold's frame. Again he spoke, but only in his heart; his lips were dumb.

"I am sinful; I think only of myself, and remember not that young heart of him who struggles with hopeless love. Shame, that I could not read therein the echo of my own sorrow! that I should dream of piercing another's breast with the same arrow that almost drank the life-blood of my own! And yet, if Lucia loves me—— But I will think no more."

And Leuthold with a troubled eye gazed over the dark lake, whose tossing waves seemed restless as his own spirit. A little boat, in which he often loved to glide over its surface, lay fastened to the willows at his feet, heaving idly to and fro. An irresistible desire made him enter it, and he was soon drifting over the wide lake alone. The ever-attendant Shadow beheld his face as he sat watching the waves, which grew higher and whiter, until the tiny vessel danced upon them

like a feather. The clouds thickened, and their gloom was reflected in Leuthold's countenance. Its expression was that of passionless hopeless desolation, mingled with a stern firmness, that seemed to set the elements at defiance. Darker and darker grew the waves, the wintry night came down, and the lake boiled like a caldron. The boat was drifted, Leuthold knew not whither, but still he sat immovable; he heard voices uttering his name, but he thought they were only the spirits of the tempest calling him on to death. At last a wave rose; it curled higher, higher; it broke, and the little boat went down.

When Leuthold awoke to life he found himself in his own chamber, with kind and well-known faces bending over him. One, dearest and kindest of all, seemed to him like an angel from the world beyond the grave. He lifted his heavy eyelids and closed them again, but not before a cry of joy had rung in his ears; it was the voice of Lucia.

"He lives! he lives! Leuthold! *my* Leuthold!" she murmured; and, half-dreaming as he was, the master felt her warm tears falling one after the other on his hand, on his brow.

"Lucia! *my* Lucia!" he was about to echo, when he heard a heavy sigh, and saw in the face of George Surlan the most agonised despair. At once the knowledge of all he had learned in his double existence came upon the Self-seer, and with it rushed back memories of his own youth. The noble heart which had suffered so much refused to inflict on that of another a like pang. The moment passed by; and the victory was won.

During the long days and weeks of sickness that succeeded, that sweet loving face was continually hovering near him. He knew that one word of his would awaken Lucia to the full consciousness of feelings now scarce developed, would enrich him with the whole treasure of her young love. Yet he never breathed that word. He pondered how he might cause the dream of girlhood to remain a dream for ever, nor deepen into the intensity of woman's love.

One day, as they sat alone together, Leuthold said to the maiden, who had been lavishing on him various gentle offices, now continued more through habit than necessity,—

"Thou art a tender nurse, Lucia,—almost like a grown woman, as thou wilt be soon, dear child. And yet it seems but a day since

I came hither, and the little girl bade me welcome so shyly. How pleasant it has been for me to find a home so full of love for the lonely wayfarer through life!"

"Was that love, then, new to thee, good master?" answered the girl. "Did not every one love thee as we?"

A deep sadness overspread Leuthold's face.

"Dear child," he said, "there is in every heart some hidden sorrow. I have never spoken of my youth, because there fell on it a dark shadow that will never pass away."

"Thou hast told me of thy mother—of her death."

"There are griefs worse than death, Lucia."

The girl's lips trembled, and she turned away her face as she said,—

"There is a sorrow of which I have heard in old tales—of which George sings—the sorrow of love."

"Even so," returned Leuthold; and his voice sunk almost inaudibly, as if he were talking to himself rather than to her. "I loved; for years this love was the dream of my boyhood, the strength of my manhood, my hope, my joy, my very life, and it was in vain!"

"Did she die?" asked Lucia, in tones as low as his own.

"Yes, to me; for she loved me not! Therefore has my life been lonely, and will be to the end."

"Not so!" tremblingly murmured Lucia. "A change may come. Thou mayst yet find some true loving heart which will be precious in thy sight."

"Lucia," answered the master, "there are two kinds of love,—the early dream of fancy, which passes away like morning dew; and the deep earnest passion of a maturer age, strengthened year after year until it has become one with life itself—which can never change. As I have lived, so I shall die, true to that lost yet most precious love of old!"

Leuthold had nerved himself thus far; he had, with desperate calmness, laid bare his heart, and the secret of his life had, for the first time, passed his lips. He could say no more; he covered his face with his hands, and leaned back exhausted. He did not see—perhaps it was well he did not—the changes in Lucia's face. She grew deadly pale, and pressed her hand upon her heart, as though there was a sharp pain there. In that moment the air-palace crumbled into dust, the bubble burst, the dream was gone! Woman-

ly dignity, not unmixed with shame, came to give her calmness and strength; and when she again looked up, her whole mien was changed.

"I thank thee, Leuthold, for thus trusting me, though I am only a child," she said. "The tale of thy sorrows shall never pass my lips."

"Be it so, dear Lucia," the master answered, in a faint tone. "Only let it rest in thy memory; and when, in thy coming years of womanhood, a true heart lays at thy feet its whole wealth of love, cast it not from thee. Now, my child, leave me, for I am weary and sad, and I would fain rest awhile."

Lucia rose, and silently arranged the cushions of his chair, as she had done since his sickness. She looked one moment with intense love on the pale sunken face, that lay back with closed eyes on the pillow, and said, softly,—

"The Virgin and all good saints comfort thee, my friend, my teacher, my more than father!"

Leuthold felt her warm lips rest for a moment on his forehead, like the kiss of a spirit in his dreams, and Lucia was gone.

It was, though she knew it not, the last farewell on earth between these twain. At the dawn of morning Leuthold went forth, a second time, as a wanderer over the wide world. Old Laurentius heard and talked of the ingratitude of man, and trembled for his precious secret; Lucia wept over the sorrow-worn spirit which could nowhere find rest; but George knew the truth, and remembered, with almost adoring reverence, the noble self-denying one who, in the midst of his own darkness, had made the path of others bright.

CHAPTER X.

The wiser mind
Mourns less for what age takes away
Than what it leaves behind.

My days, my friend, are almost gone;
My life has been approved,
And many love me; but by none
Am I enough beloved.—

Wordsworth.

Good reader, if thou lovest tales of deep mystery and exciting adventure, truly this is but a Barmecide's feast for thee! I have led thee along through the straight path of human life without any turnings or windings; thou hast had not a single maze of mystery to lose thyself in; not one precipice of hor-

rible doubt to whose brink thou goest smiling, knowing well that thou wilt not be suffered to fall; I have not left thee to grope thy way in darkness through terrible scenes of sorrow, which are to end in a sudden burst of light; nor have I deluded thee with sunshine until thou camest to the mouth of a cavern of eternal gloom. To drop the metaphor, this is a plain story of life; but more of the inner life of the heart than the visible existence of man. And such are the truest and the deepest of all; for there is no romance of outward worldly fortunes like the history of the heart.

Therefore, reader, if thou lovest such, if thou hast gone thus far with us, and, perchance, on the way, some world-wide chords have been touched which have found an echo in thine own heart, journey with us to the end.

Let us again pass unchronicled some years in Leuthold's life, and look upon him once more. He was returning from a long wandering abroad to his native Germany. Yes! the bent old man, with his thin grey hair and feeble steps, slow and tremulous in spite of the staff he held, was, indeed, the same Leuthold Auerbach, once the young student of Leipsic. He walked along like a man who had no care to hasten his journey, inasmuch as it led to no home. One always knows those happy travellers who have an end in view, towards which their steps are tending; they look different from the wayside loiterers, to whom all the world is the same.

As Leuthold journeyed, he stayed now and then to look at the bright summer sky and pleasant country around him, or to listen to the birds. At such times his eye lighted up with a spark of its olden fire. He had not lost all the blessed feelings of youth, his heart had not grown old, for he still loved and worshipped the beautiful in all things.

While he rested, the gay carol of a young man's voice reached his ear. It came nearer and nearer, and at last the singer emerged from a winding in the road. He seemed one of the race of wandering students so well known in Germany. His cap was set on his head with a careless jauntiness; his small bundle swung over his shoulder at the end of a stick; in his frank handsome face might be read youth, health, a light heart, and a gay temper; and his clear joyous ditty gave full confirmation of the same.

Leuthold watched him approach; and as the other perceived his fellow-traveller he

stopped his song, doffing his cap with the instinctive respect of youth to age, which always betokens a good heart,—

"Thou art very merry, my young friend," said Leuthold, smiling. "Pray do not cease that pleasant song of yours. It does one good to hear it."

"Thanks, kind sir," answered the young man. "I assure you it does me good to sing it. It is quite a relief to be free to make a noise in this pleasant open country, after being a long time shut up in musty rooms."

"You are a student, then?"

"Oh, yes. I have been these two years at Heidelberg, and am now going home. I never wished to study; I hate such a weary life; but my parents gave me the name of a learned man, and thought, dear good creatures, that I must, perforce, turn out learned too. I fear they will be mistaken."

"And what is your name, my merry young sir?" asked Leuthold, who took a vague interest in the frank pleasant face, as if he had seen it before, and seemed to feel reluctant for it to leave his sight.

"'Tis one that sounds well—Leuthold Waldhof. But you seem to know it," said the young man, as his companion started from the fallen tree on which they had both been sitting, looked eagerly in his face, and then turned aside, muttering,—

"Yes, I have heard it before. Why did your parents call you so?"

"I have already told you, worthy sir, I was named from a learned man, whom my father and mother knew well when they were both young. I have often heard my mother talk about him—how wise he was, and how good, too; until we children got weary of his perfections, and almost hated the name of Leuthold Auerbach!"

"Is he living now?" asked the old man's tremulous voice.

"Oh, no! surely not. He went away suddenly; it was a little time before my father and mother were married, and they never heard of him more. He had just gained great honours for his learning; so he grew tired of his native city—at least so my father used to say—and they looked for a long time to hear of his fame in some place or other. At last my mother said he must be dead, or he would not have forgotten them, and I have often seen her weep when she thought of him."

Leuthold drew his cloak over his face, and his thin fingers played convulsively with his stick. Alas, alas! that olden dream clung to

him still. He could not look upon the son of Herman and Hilda.

"I am wearying you, good sir, with this long story," said the young student, eyeing him with somewhat of curiosity; "and you seem to have journeyed far to-day. Will you suffer me to bear you company awhile, and when you are rested we can go on together. A young man's arm may help you over this rough road."

As the youth spoke his mother's soul looked out of the kind brown eyes—his mother's tone breathed in the softened voice; at least so it seemed to Leuthold. He gazed one moment in his face, and then fell on the neck of Hilda's son.

"Tell me of thy parents—of Leipsic—of my ancient home," cried the old man, almost weeping. "Tell me all, dear boy; for I am Leuthold Auerbach!"

Ere long the two who had so strangely met were sitting hand-in-hand like old friends, while the unconscious youth described to Leuthold the home of Herman and Hilda—how they lived surrounded by their children, with every comfort that wealth could bestow, enjoying that household peace and unity which makes home a very paradise of love. The boy spoke of his mother, and the kindling of his eye told how dear Hilda was to her son.

"Is thy mother still as beautiful as she was?" murmured Leuthold.

"Beautiful!" answered the student, laughing. "Why, none of us ever thought of that; perhaps she might have been so once. My father says little Hilda is very like her, and she is an angel of a child. But our mother is so good, so tender—we love her so much."

"Yes, yes, all love her!" said the other, absently; his thoughts were wandering to the old nook in the professor's house, and the young maiden who sat there, with her calm sweet face, and her glossy hair.

"Whither art thou travelling, honoured friend?" asked the young man at last. "See! we have let the sun set upon our talk—hast thou far to go?"

"Yes!—no!—I cannot tell," muttered Leuthold. "I hardly know whither chance may lead me," he added, with a faint smile; "I have long been a wanderer."

"Then thou shalt come home with me to my father's house; it will be so pleasant. How proud I shall feel to have found thee, and brought thee again to Leipsic!"

Leuthold half-resisted the affectionate en-

treaty; even now his spirit shrank from reviving that bitter sorrow of old. But when the earnest boy pictured the welcome that awaited them, how happy his mother would be, the old man gave way, and they journeyed on together.

They parted for the night, the elder Leuthold and his young namesake, more like father and son than like those who a few hours before had met as strangers. But in the still night, when youth slumbers in happy dreams and age alone is wakeful, all the past came as vividly as yesterday on Leuthold's mind. It came, yet brought no pain. He was as one who re-treads some old scenes through which he has once passed. Now the dusky twilight is over all, veiling alike the rich valley and the gloomy rocks; he knows they were there once, but he sees them no longer, or only dim and indistinct. The whole landscape of life, with its sunshine and storm, its joy and pain, seem all still and peaceful now.

Leuthold thought, with a heart that throbbed no longer, of his early love. He pictured her as he would soon see her, in her calm happiness, a mother and wife; and he rejoiced that her gentle nature—which gave affectionate tears to the imagined memory of the dead—had never been pained by the knowledge of the hopeless sorrow of the living. His deep love had been unstained by one selfish feeling, and the balm of sanctified affection lay upon his heart, giving it peace at last.

As he mused his eye fell upon a letter which he had carried for some days in his bosom; it too brought calm blessed thoughts of trials passed and duties fulfilled.

"My best friend, my dear master!" wrote George Surlan, "rejoice with me, for my Lucia is won! How happy we are in our dear home at Ulm!—she loving me with all wife-like love, none the less precious because it required long and patient wooing, and was the growth of years. If thou couldst but see us now—see Lucia, the dreamy fantastic girl, transformed into the sedatest young matron in Ulm,—save that at times she leaves her busy household cares to laugh with her foolish husband, who has not grown wise yet, and has even stolen away some of her own wisdom to make her like himself. Yet she thinks him the greatest man that ever lived, always excepting thee, dear master. Thou knowest how Laurentius has long passed away; Geinsfleicht broke the old man's heart. John and Peter are rich men now; but I do

not envy them, I have my Lucia and my noble Art. If thou comest to Ulm, thou shalt see our cathedral rich in the work of my hands. Lucia says there could be no such wood-carvings anywhere; perhaps it is because she sees her own sweet face, and her husband's too, among the carved ornaments. What vanity! Dear master, forgive the foolishness of a happy heart that will bless thee while it beats."

Leuthold read for the twentieth time those joyful outpourings of content, and then laid down and slept as peacefully as a child.

Reader, thou hast not been deluded by the creation of fancy. If thou goest to Ulm, thou wilt see there in the cathedral wood-carvings so exquisite that thou wilt marvel that nought but the artist's name, "George Surlan," has descended to posterity. But among the saints, and sibyls, and philosophers, which he has carved, are two heads, life-like and yet most beautiful, which tradition will tell thee are portraits of the artist and his wife. Lament not thou if the lapse of time has swept away all other memorials. These two silent images speak of youth and beauty—of divine Art and holy domestic love, mingled in sweet union. Surely, though fame has remembered them not, happiest of the happy were George Surlan and his Lucia.

CONCLUSION.

Thou shalt lower to his level day by day,
What is fine within thee growing coarse to sympathy with clay.

Tennyson.

Whether that lady's gentle mind
No longer with the form combined,
I dare not guess!

For love, and beauty, and delight,
There is no death nor change. Their might
Exceeds our organs, which endure
No light, being themselves obscure.

Shelley.

AFTER some days' journey Leuthold and young Waldhof arrived within sight of Leipzig. The boy gave full vent to the exuberance of his joy until they drew near, and then the faintest possible shadow fell upon his mirth. All feel this, more or less, in coming home—a sense as if we hardly dare to be so happy. Young Leuthold did not marvel that his companion was graver than ordinary, and a native delicacy of feeling contributed to silence his tongue. Slowly and wearily the feet of the old man trod the road down which he had fled like the wind on that early morning, impelled by the agony of despairing love. The strength

of youth was no more; but with it, too, had passed away youth's keen sorrow. Leuthold would not have recalled a single day of that olden time.

They stood before the garden where the last sound of Hilda's voice had rung upon his ear. It was all changed; the thick shadowing trees were cut down—the green alleys which Hilda had loved so much,—and on the smooth lawn a troop of children were playing. The change smote upon Leuthold's heart; he would not have found a single tree altered in the dear old garden.

"That was my grandfather's house," said the young student. "Doubtless you find it changed. After his death my father cut down the trees, and then sold it."

"And thy mother—what said she?"

"Oh, she was quite satisfied that it was right, they made the house so gloomy with their thick branches. I believe she was glad of the change."

Hilda glad to see her ancient home despoiled—to see her old father's dwelling in the hands of strangers! It was a trifling thing, but Leuthold was pained. For years, in his dreams, every turn in the long shady walks, every bush and tree, had been visited in his memory—now even they were no more.

As they passed down the narrow street Leuthold glanced up at the window of his own small room; the sanctuary of his spirit in those olden times. A long gaudy flag flaunted out of the lattice; they were celebrating a great victory, and the town of Leipzig was bedizened like a conqueror's bride. Leuthold turned away, and looked up no more until he found himself at the abode of Herman.

"Father, father!" cried the joyful tones of the younger Waldhof, as they heard a loud and somewhat coarse voice above the yelping of innumerable hounds at the entrance of the domain, and saw a tall heavily-made man lounging among various retainers.

"What! is't thou, my boy?" said the large man, laying his two hands on the youth's shoulders. "Glad to see thee again! How much learning hast brought from Heidelberg? As many ounces as thou hast grown inches? Thou wilt be a wise fellow, Leuthold! Ha! ho! he!" And a laugh loud and long spoke the father's delight.

No way disconcerted, the student echoed his hoarse merriment in the silvery tones of youth, and then said, proud of his mysterious secret,—

"Guess, father, whom I have found and brought to see you."

Herr Waldhof glanced carelessly at the stranger. "Some master of thine, I suppose. He is very welcome. Give me thy hand, old man; we'll use thee well."

But Leuthold held the broad brown hand in his, and said,—

"Hast thou forgotten me, Herman?"

There was no mistaking the low sweet voice, which alone remained unchanged. Herman almost buried the slight frame of his old friend in his giant embrace, and shouted and laughed alternately, with joy at the recognition. Then he held Leuthold out at arm's length and scanned him closely.

"Why, thou art grown an old man already! Never mind, we all change. How hast thou lived, and where? But thou must come and see Madame Waldhof."

"Madame Waldhof!" How strange it sounded. Yet Leuthold was glad that the dear name of Hilda was not uttered by such lips.

Herman and Leuthold passed through the long avenue together. Different as they had been in youth, the contrast was more striking than ever in age. Herman's full broad face spoke of the redundancy of animal life. There was not a spark of intelligence in the large eyes, and the handsome features had grown almost coarse. Leuthold, with his attenuated frame, his thin and sharpened face, was now more beautiful to look upon than Herman. The two men were types of the sensual and the spiritual; one sinking the noblest form to its own meanness, the other exalting the least beautiful exterior to the nobility of the essence within.

As they reached the door, Leuthold drew back. "Wilt thou not first tell thy wife I am here? She may be startled—pained, at this sudden meeting with her dead father's friend."

Herr Waldhof laughed aloud. "Oh, thou needst not fear any such thing; Hilda is not very much given to sentiment. She thinks little of the old times now, I suspect. Come along."

In the old hall—it was the same in which we first beheld the two friends—sat a matron in the midst of a troop of noisy children and serving-maids. She was rosy, and contented-looking; not a wrinkle marked the comely brow; and the brown eyes seemed ever-smiling. The round broad cheek, and portly figure, had long lost all the proportions of girlhood; and something unmistakable about the matron's air and tone told of a greater

change than these—a change in mind and soul. As Leuthold kissed the hand of Madame Waldhof, he no longer thought of the Hilda of his boyhood.

She let fall a few tears as she spoke of her father, and then the wife of Herman recovered her usual calm demeanour. She called her children, who, after much resistance, came to kiss Leuthold's hand one by one. One,—a sweet, modest-eyed, little maiden, whom her mother called Hilda,—came and stood by Leuthold's knee. It seemed as if the spirit of the first Hilda were revived in her; as the old man met her calm open gaze, and laid his hand on her soft braided hair, the child wondered that he repeated her name so often in such a low dreamy tone, and that as he kissed her a tear, not her own, was left upon her cheek. It had fallen to the memory of what was now a shadow—the Hilda who once had been.

"You will annoy Leuthold with all these young folk," said Herman to his wife. "Mothers are so vain of their children! Come, old friend, and I will show you all the changes I have made in the house."

"You have let this hall remain, I see," said Leuthold, in a low tone, as they went out. "Do you remember that night, Herman?"

"The night I dreamed such a wild dream? It was some of thy strange fancies which got into my brain, Leuthold; but I have forgotten all such things now. Let us go and see the horses. I hunt almost as much as ever, though I am not so young as I was the day I quarrelled with Von P——. Ha! ha! Dost remember it, Leuthold? To think how foolish I made myself for the sake of that old dame yonder! Yet Hilda has been a good wife to me; and we live very comfortably."

"I am glad," Leuthold answered, absently; and Herman continued—

"Those old times were pleasant, after all, and we often laugh over them. I sometimes thought, after you went so suddenly, that you really fancied Hilda. But if you did, I suppose you have long got over it—these love notions are foolish things. We are all wiser, and we need not quarrel about her now—Ha! ha!"

And Waldhof's laugh made needless the answer which, for his life, Leuthold could not have uttered. All that day he followed his friend mechanically, sat at the board, listened to the husband and wife as they discussed the daily household events, and chronicled the

words and deeds of their children. Once only the conversation turned on things in which Leuthold could take an interest. He asked after the treasures of the Professor's library.

"Oh, they have passed into different hands," said Madame Waldhof. "I was told that no one cares for manuscripts now, since printing has become known."

"For my part I care little for books or manuscripts either. One lives very comfortably without being learned. I have not seen Madame Waldhof read this long time; and I think of her just as highly. And I imagine she, too, is quite as contented with me as if I were the greatest man living."

Hilda looked up in her husband's face with a beaming smile, and laid her hand in his. That look brought back her girlish days—it showed that one feeling remained the same—woman's love!

At last, when Herr Waldhof had fallen asleep, and his wife sat spinning beside him in perfect silence, lest his slumbers should be broken, Leuthold crept away to his own chamber. There, in the stillness of meditation, his whole life rose up before him with its array of shadows. They glided past him, fast changing like forms in a dream. He alone remained the same. To the time of grey hairs Leuthold had carried the one true feeling of life—love! It was a reality; all the rest were but fleeting shadows. He rejoiced that it had been so; that his love had been made immortal in memory; that, embalmed by suffering, the one ideal had remained secure through the changes of life. In this love he rested, still worshipping, not the real Hilda, the wife of Herman, but the Hilda of his dreams—the pure image of womanhood. He loved, not her, but Love itself.

Again in his solitude his guardian angel stood beside Leuthold. It showed him the difference between the life of the body and the life of the soul; it painted the man-animal at his feasts, at his pleasures, wasting his existence in petty joys; how, when the mask of youth falls off, he sinks down, down, by lower degrees, until, in the aged driveller, no sign remains of the casket that contained a divine soul.

"Wouldst thou have exchanged thy life, with all its loneliness, all its cares, for such an one as this?" murmured the inner voice. "Hast thou not been rich?—in the wealth of thy soul. Hast thou not been happy?—in scattering blessings on others, far and wide. Hast thou not been loved? for all holy spirits look down from heaven with immortal love on the man who walks the earth in purity, in meekness, and in charity. Thou hast done thy work, O faithful one! Lay thy burden down, and enter into thy rest."

And on Leuthold's ear fell another low tone—solemn and sweet—which he knew well—

"Come," it breathed, "son of my love, I wait for thee! Come to thy home! The dark shadows are passing away; the immortal day is dawning. Thou hast lived, thou hast suffered, thou hast conquered. Now rejoice!"

As the old man listened, a heavenly smile brightened his face, for he knew that the time was at hand. He looked out into the night, and the angels of the stars breathed their influence down upon him. Every ray, as it fell, brought with it a divine essence, penetrating to his inmost soul. Joyfully, rapturously that soul answered the summons, and spread its wings to the land of immortality.

L'ENLUMINEUSE;

OR, THE THREE FLOWER-MARKETS AT PARIS.

A TALE.

SCENE I.

THERE are, or there were, three principal Marchés aux Fleurs in Paris,—one on the Quay, one on the Boulevard St. Martin, and one on the Place de la Madeleine. These three flower-markets, like every thing else in this world, have their own caste, their own fashion and rank. Getting into railway phraseology as we are, we may designate them as first, second, and third classes. That on the Place de la Madeleine is the first class, at least in point of price, and, therefore, it appertains more especially to first-class people; that on the Boulevard is the second class flower-market, and that on the Quay a third class, where you may find a flower to answer all the purposes a flower was designed for, and pay a third-class price for it.

One bright Wednesday, the market on the Quay presented quite a charming spectacle. Flowers are the sole luxury of the poor and hard-working; for young women who pass long summer days at ceaseless needlework, how sweet is it to repose their eyes a moment on a little verdure; to cast a glance now and then on an opening bud, or inhale the fragrance breathed forth from open petals, even on the noisome air of a city lodging! The pale mechanic places a pot of mignonette in his window, and sickly geraniums screen out the little air that can enter a London attic. A superfluity which gives a moment's happiness should be allowed to pass for a necessity. But in France flowers are a necessity to the working people; the humblest house-keeper, when she carefully appropriates her pence to sundry necessities, reserves a sou for the modest bouquet which is to be laid over her other purchases.

The flower-market on the Quay was that of the poor, or working people; and there, on this bright Wednesday morning, might be seen a very poor-looking and very little old man, whose air of decency and careful exterior seemed to say that his poverty arose from the goodness of his heart and the unworldly character of his mind. His old black clothes, although rain had incorporated some

dust in their texture, were scrupulously clean; and what was rather remarkable, especially as the little old man was French, they contrasted in colour with the white cravat so carefully disposed around his neck. He was small, thin, and shrivelled, with knees and shoulders rather bent, but his bright dark eyes shone with vivacity and benevolence, his lips closed in a smile, and he looked about him on the flowers, the flower-sellers, and flower-buyers, as if he were pleased with them and pleased with himself, and saw some beauty and some goodness in all that he looked upon.

He walked along the Quay, examining the plants near at hand or further off, admiring them at a distance, or plunging his face among them to breathe their odours. At last selecting the most modest of the glowing ranks, he drew up to one of the *marchandes de fleurs*, who seemed disposed to notice his advances, and, pointing to a little pot of violets, said,—

“How much for that?”

“That violet? Six sous!”

“Ah! yes, truly! Six sous? You don't say so to me? I am a man of experience!”

“I don't know if you often buy from others, but I know this is the first time I ever sold to you,” returned Madame la Marchande, rearranging her bouquets.

“Ah bah! No Wednesday or Saturday ever passes without my coming here. I adore flowers!” said the little old man, clasping his hands on his breast; “and if I had a garden—oh, if I had a garden!—it should be charming! one flower-basket; but I have only a window, and that not large.” All this time the eyes of the little old man were roving from flower to flower, from plant to plant; he smelled some, touched others, but still returned to his first-love, the pot of violets. “Let us see. I offer you two sous for this violet.”

“Four; not less.”

“But I tell you I am a man of experience. Every second month I change my flower-pot, and it is always the violet; it is not the dearest, certainly, but it is my favourite—it

is the sweetest. Hold ! there is your money."

"No, no ! four sous, not less."

"If the gentleman will not buy it, I will," said a pretty little voice beside him. The old man turned a reproving look on the speaker who had thus come to excite opposition and raise the price of the violet. It was curious to see how that slightly wrathful expression changed as he regarded his opponent. Two sweet and lively black eyes, well opened and full of intelligence, and of a pretty degree of sauciness, looked with a perfect unconsciousness of all wrong into his ; he saw a small, expressive, though rather *retroussé* nose, and one of the prettiest mouths in the world, the full rosy lips, drawn into a smile so widely as to display the pearly teeth that seemed to laugh within it ;—he saw, in short, a face at once fresh, pretty, and amiable, three agreeable qualities which could please even our little old man ; and this united to the smallest, neatest, most attractive little figure imaginable. The girl was apparently about nineteen years of age, simply but rather smartly dressed ; a pretty-coloured robe, a coquettish black apron, a shawl tastefully arranged on her very nicely-formed shoulders, and a dainty but tiny cap, scarcely concealing the rich glossy hair it affected to cover. She was evidently of the working classes—*une fille du peuple*—but her exact position it would be impossible to assign. Instead of uttering a reprimand, the old man, with one hand placing the disputed pot of violets in hers, with the other pulled off his well-worn hat, and, swinging it almost to the ground, said, with an air of gallantry which must have antedated revolutionary times,—

"I cannot regret that I am not to be the possessor of this flower, since it will belong to one as sweet."

The young girl smiled, with a slight blush ; such a compliment, from such a personage, deserved a smile of pleasure.

"Ah, monsieur, pardon !" she cried ; "I spoke without thinking I might contradict your wishes. Pray keep the flower, monsieur, I will not buy it."

"No, truly, mademoiselle, I am too happy to yield it to you, since that gives you a pleasure ; besides, she will not take my two sous for it. But, mademoiselle, allow me in return the pleasure of carrying it home for you ; the pot is not quite clean ; it may soil your robe, or spoil your pretty mittens. I have nothing to spoil, as you see." And the old man glanced over his threadbare habili-

ments, and down to the tips of his well-cleaned shoes.

The girl regarded him rather curiously, as he held the pot of violets pressed against his side, much after the manner in which a soldier holds his musket ; and answered, with some archness,—

"Well, sir, I accept your offer, on condition that you will place the violet yourself on my window, and I forewarn you that that window is in the sixth story."

"Mademoiselle, if it was on the tower of Notre Dame I would carry it there with joy !" and then, with a smothered sigh not accordant with his old-fashioned gallantry, the little old man added, from a habit possibly of speaking to himself, "I have nothing else to do just now."

They set off together ; the young girl stopped before an old house, and entered a passage as dark as its outward aspect appeared to promise.

"This is the house, sir. Take care ! the passage is dark, and the stairs slippery ; but when you get once hold of the balustrade you are safe."

The little old man, pressing the pot of violets within one arm, groped with the other to find the auspicious balustrade.

"It is rather high, sir," continued the lively girl, mounting quickly upwards ; "rather high, you see ; one hundred and forty steps to ascend."

"I go on without counting," said the old monsieur, managing his breath as well as he could ; "but I think we must have nearly finished that number."

"Yes, here is the last ;" and the young girl, drawing a key from her pocket, threw open the door of a neat chamber, arranged not only with much care, but with somewhat of coquettish pretension. And now the reason of her having made the poor old man to mount to the sixth story became apparent. On a small round table stood all the preparatives for her breakfast ; all that had been wanting was a bunch of flowers, and Mademoiselle 'Lena had gone to get some, and had brought home the pot of violets and the little old man ; and as she slyly regarded the latter, it was obvious she knew more of him than he knew of her.

"Now, monsieur," said the pretty 'Lena, "I hope, as you have carried my violets up that long dark staircase, you will not object to partake of my modest breakfast. I have given you the pleasure of serving me, now,

en revanche, you must let me have that of serving you."

The little old man coloured, bowed, stepped backwards, and bowed again. He looked at the breakfast-table, and felt all the hesitation to accept the offer which the consciousness that it was a desirable one sometimes imparts. But a compromise with such delicacy appeared.

"Hah! mademoiselle, mademoiselle!" he cried, starting forward with outstretched hands as 'Lena went to lift the pot of violets, "the bargain is not complete. If I am to share your breakfast, you must permit me to fulfil my task, and place your emblem flower myself in your window. Suffer me to complete my work before I taste your tempting repast."

Leaning together out of the window, they arranged the pot of violets.

"Get some water," said 'Lena, as she withdrew; "the earth is quite dry. There, in that *carafe*—that will do. Now pour it on—now, get a saucer from the shelf, and put it under the pot to catch the water. Not that one, that is my best saucer—yes, that other is right. Now move the pot a little more into the centre, it is not quite straight—it spoils the effect. There! all is right at present; and now breakfast is ready." For, while issuing her orders, the cunning little housekeeper had been engaging the old man's attention, in order that she might make sundry little additions to her simple repast, which she would not have thought of for herself. There was more fruit put on the table, and some small portion of *vin ordinaire*, and preparations made for a cup of *café au lait*.

"And now, Monsieur Célestine," she said, turning with a smile full of life and sweetness to her guest, "is it possible you have so entirely forgotten me?"

"Forgotten you, mademoiselle! — one never forgets what is so charming. Forgotten you! Since when?"

"Since I was your little pupil—*petite drôle*, you know, who drew figures instead of writing in her copy-book—who was so fond of making little puppet-shows—eh, monsieur?"

The old man gazed with extended eyes, and arms pressed straight down by his sides, then ejaculated a long and wondering,—

"*Par exemple!* the little 'Lena, who used to fill her copy-book with scenes from the stage, and turn all my pupils into actors or actresses! *Par exemple!* but, mademoiselle, you are grown a young woman."

A hearty laugh was 'Lena's response.

"Yes, truly, Monsieur Célestine; and will, I fear, grow to be an old one."

The little old man advanced a few steps, took 'Lena's hand by the tips of the fingers, bowed low, and pressed his lips upon it.

"Quite a scene, quite a scene!" she cried, with another laugh; and, clapping her pretty hands with pleasure; "*Allons! allons!* let us breakfast."

"And, mademoiselle," said old Célestine, as he commenced with good appetite the offered meal, "your good father, and pious mother, where are they? It is so long since I gave lessons in writing."

"Ah, monsieur, let us not speak of what gives pain!" 'Lena said, hastily, and with a change of countenance which showed that warm feeling lay beneath a volatile manner. "My dear parents! they are no more in this world; it is more than four years since my father left me alone—I was just fifteen then—my good mother went to heaven first."

"An orphan? poor child! And what did you do then?"

"Monsieur Dupré the father took me to live in his house. I lived there until about six months ago, when Monsieur Dupré the father died, and I could not live with Monsieur Dupré the son—at least, that is to say, not then."

"Poor orphan! poor orphan!" repeated the old man. "So you are alone?"

"*Toute seule, toute seule,*" said 'Lena, smiling through the tears she wanted to dispel. "But then, you see, I have so much to do—always at work; and when one works always, why, you know one amuses one's self very well."

"And what do you work at, mademoiselle?"

"*Je suis enlumineuse,*" replied 'Lena, glancing at a little side-table, where lay a mass of drawings, rough sketches, and coloured figures decked in all rainbow tints. "I illustrate works of fancy," she added.

"Mademoiselle!" the old man ejaculated, with a gaze of sudden interest, "you illustrate works! that is, you, by your pencil, embody in tangible forms the glorious imaginations which the author shadows forth in words; you transfer ideas into things; you materialise mind—in fact, you illustrate authors!"

Another laugh from 'Lena.

"Oh yes! I represent all the ideas of Blue Beard while he holds his wife's hair in one

hand and his scimitar in the other ; and show all the glorious imaginations of Tom Thumb when he was riding on the butterfly's back, and transfer his ideas into form when he is swallowed by the cow with the thistle to which he was tied."

The little old man had rested his joined hands on the table ; he was gazing across it full into the sparkling eyes of the pretty *enlumineuse*, as if lost in amaze, and unable to think whether her account of the bent of her genius were sober matter-of-fact or not.

" *Mais enfin*," he said at length, "you are connected with literature, mademoiselle?"

" *Sans doute*," replied 'Lena, assuming a countenance as grave, "since I have just illustrated the story of *Mother Goose*."

" Well, mademoiselle, and I also, I have never renounced my *penchant* for literature ; I am no longer by profession a writing-master, I am an author only. I have been so for many years, even while I retained the former profession ; but now, mademoiselle, now I follow only the glorious career of an author."

" Indeed !" was 'Lena's response—" *Monsieur Célestine auteur !*" and she made him a little bow of salutation across the table. " Ah ! it is a charming title. Your name is then renowned, and I, here so retired from the world, I have never heard of it, not even when I carried home to the publishers my illuminations."

" Mademoiselle, such is the fate of genius," replied Célestine, rather mournfully. " Not that I mean to pretend, no—but after death, ah !" exclaimed the little old man, clasping his hands, and throwing up his eyes in an ecstasy of real devotion—" ah ! we may say, in more senses than one, that after death comes glory !"

" Then, in fact, you have published ?" said 'Lena.

" Mademoiselle, I have wished to publish."

" Oh !"

" It is true ; yes, I have wished to publish ; but something—I know not what—we should not be rash ; the ancients recommended deliberation ; and, besides, the taste of our age is trivial. Yes, it must be confessed it is trivial ; it has opened a career for you, mademoiselle—that is natural ; but to me, you see—to me, it is not suited ; one must wait.

wish to have all my manuscripts ready for the press ; but I do not, in fact, expect to see them published during my life ; but after my death——"

" Ah ! that is noble !" said little 'Lena, in

a state of exaltation. " You would wish the booksellers, or, in short, any one in the world, to benefit by your labours, if you yourself never can do so ; but, meantime, if you do not print, my dear Monsieur Célestine, what do you do ?"

" I write."

" True ; but if you do not teach writing, and if you do not sell your writings ?"

" Ah ! *c'est vrai, c'est vrai !*" said the poor little man, shrugging his shoulders with a rather woful look. " Yes, *chère demoiselle*, there is another trial to which genius is subjected in this life ; even the noblest, purest, most exalted minds must stoop to think about meat, and drink, and fire, and lodging, and all those poor paltry things, which are quite beneath their attention, but which it is really hard to do without."

" Very hard, indeed," said 'Lena, preparing herself a little cup of *café au lait*, and throwing Monsieur Célestine a knowing glance of her laughing eye.

" But then, what is to be done ?" he continued. " What is life for if talent is not to be employed ; if the powers of the mind are to be devoted to gaining food and clothing for the body ; or if the fingers only are to be employed in writing, when the thoughts of the soul are not to be transmitted to paper ? Ah ! dear young lady, it is one thing to trace on paper certain characters which other hands are to copy and then may destroy, and to trace those which you know will live after you, which exalt your own soul, and will exalt those of your fellow-creatures when yours is in eternity. Oh ! it is truly different ; and when we think of this we do not care to sell our writings, we only wish to know they will be in print."

" Well," said 'Lena, " I rejoice to have met you, for I, too, am ambitious of fame ; I, too, wish to commence a brilliant career. You will sympathise with me, you can advise me. My *penchant* is for the stage—I wish to be an actress."

The old man started ; he opened his eyes, but their expression changed to one like that of fear.

" An actress ! You, pretty child ! poor little orphan ! you an actress ! Heaven forbid !"

" What ?" cried 'Lena, " would you discourage me ? You say we must follow the bent of our genius, the force of our inspirations."

" True. Genius is a noble thing ; and genius will sometimes take the direction of

the stage," said the old man, thoughtfully; but then ——"

"Yes, yes," 'Lena interrupted, "my genius has quite run on the stage long since. Why, see now, Monsieur Célestine, ever since I began to illuminate I longed to act; in fact, you know it was acting on paper instead of acting on the boards; and I am sure I should have performed *Beauty and the Beast* a hundred times over if I had had any one to take the part of the Beast—that good Dupré, certainly, might have made a very good Beast. I drew Monsieur Beast walking away from the supper-table the other day, saying,—‘Will you be my wife, Beauty?’ and Beauty sitting at the table says,—‘No, Beast.’” And 'Lena's little nose actually looked some degrees more *retroussé*.

"Do you allude to Monsieur Dupré père? mademoiselle," demanded the old man.

"No; to Monsieur Dupré fils."

"And would Monsieur Dupré fils perform his part to the satisfaction of Beauty if he said,—‘Will you be my wife?’" asked Célestine.

'Lena burst out laughing.

"Oh! I assure you, so far as that part goes, he has rehearsed it many a time; but it won't do—poor Dupré is nothing in the world but a grocer. Bah! to sell plums and sugar—to be a grocer's wife! No, Beast, no!"

"But Beauty took the Beast after all, mademoiselle."

"But the Beast changed into a prince."

"Not until she loved him. Ah, it was her love turned the Beast into the beautiful prince."

'Lena looked down and smiled.

"*C'est égal, Monsieur,*" she said, after a pause, "my beast must remain a beast for ever. You see my inclination is for the theatre; I long for *éclat*. Only think, to appear in public, to be applauded by crowds, to wear such charming costumes, to perform such various parts, to hear a young nobleman declare his adoration, to feel one's self a princess! Oh, yes! I must follow my inspiration. I have dreamed of this while illuminating *Le petit Poucet*! Look you here," and, jumping from the table, she ran to fetch a little coloured daub of a great butterfly, with the wonderful Tom Thumb on its back. "There! to soar about like *le petit Poucet*, that is my fancy, and not to be the wife of a grocer."

"But, mademoiselle, *petit Poucet* got a sad fall; you know the spider's breath put an end to his career. Ah, *chère demoiselle*! the

world is often like the spider's breath to the ardent spirit, the aspiring mind, the feeling heart of youth!"

"So you would discourage me!" 'Lena, with evident disappointment, answered. "I thought that you, who felt the fire of genius yourself, would rather promote it in another."

"Ah!" cried Célestine, "it is a noble thing to be called to the aid of Genius, to fan that sacred flame which is not destined to expire with the mortal breath; but then, in fact, the good grocer, mademoiselle, what would he say to your following what you consider to be your vocation?"

'Lena laughed, but she coloured also, and looked a little saddened.

"*Ma foi!*" she cried, "he would say I was not fit to be a grocer's wife, that is all; but I can do without him if I can only be on the stage."

"Mademoiselle," said the old man, "it is an honour to be asked for advice, but it is sometimes difficult to give it, and it is sometimes more difficult to get it taken when given. I will, however, tell you my sentiments. After mature consideration, it appears to me that the married state is not friendly to the exercise of genius, seeing that varieties of cares, occupations, and relationships, tend to prevent that absorption of the mental faculties which is necessary to the production of great works, and the sacred fire of genius grows dim in the distractions of domestic life. I do not, therefore, combat your disinclination to the marriage state, nor to the particular one of a grocer's wife. You wish to devote your genius to higher pursuits. Good! but, *chère demoiselle*, it is certain that your genius, which first showed itself in illustrating fairy tales, took the direction of the stage from that simple accident. Now you have, by another accident, the accident merely of a meeting in the flower-market on the Quay, and buying a pot of violets, been brought into contact with a kindred spirit, into communion with a mind that appreciates the sacred fire which glows within your own. Now, may not the path of literature invite you, and draw you from the more glittering, but less noble, one to which your fancy has inclined?"

'Lena kept looking steadfastly at the speaker, but was evidently mystified as to his meaning.

"If I were to read you daily a portion of my works, my child," continued the old man

—“I have more than thirty manuscripts quite prepared for the press, but which I am sure will never be put to press during my lifetime. If I were to read them to you your genius would, I think, be led to those pursuits in which I have spent the greater part of my existence.”

“Ah! good Monsieur Célestine, your genius is not at all like mine—the sacred fire in your breast burns quite in another manner,” said 'Lena. “Mine is only like a lucifer match, it will strike fire and be out in a moment; besides, I have no patience. I fear not even your thirty manuscripts would make me content to wait till after my death in order to please the world and to be admired.”

Célestine heaved a sigh, and shook his head; he thought there was something wrong, something that required correction in this young mind, but he knew not exactly how to set about the correction; and it was a fearful risk to leave it to correct itself.

“At least, mademoiselle, you have studied the drama; you have imbibed the spirit of our dramatic poets; you are familiar with Racine, Voltaire——”

“That may be supposed,” 'Lena interrupted; “but, monsieur, my taste is quite a natural one; and, besides, it is solely for comedy, and for the comic opera. *Vive l'opéra comique!*—ah! voilà ce que j'aime!”

“Here is what you love, Mademoiselle 'Lena!—but have you really said so?” cried a rather comic voice at the door; and there, peeping through it, appeared a curly black head, and very sufficiently good-looking face.

'Lena uttered a pretty affected little cry, jumped up, and, turning her back on the door, hid her laughing countenance in her open hands, and stood exactly as if she were performing a part on the boards.

“Monsieur Dupré *filz*,” she said in a whisper intended for the old man; and, in what is called a playhouse whisper, added for the amusement of the other, “Ah, he is here, he has heard me—I have betrayed myself!”

The young grocer entered quite into the spirit of the scene, pretending, and perhaps not finding it difficult to pretend, to take the declaration of her love as if addressed to himself; and 'Lena, though at last she protested that he overacted his part, and though she played her own with a vast deal of coquetry, gave the wondering little old man good reason to imagine that her “No, Beast!” might be by no means so emphatic as she had just pronounced it. He stared at the young act-

ors, and began to doubt whether the genius of the pretty *enlumineuse* was altogether unsuited to a grocer's wife.

The old man and the young lover went away together; the former felt a beam of social love shine into his solitary heart; he thought he had found a kindred mind in that of Mademoiselle 'Lena. Many a time he had sought a literary acquaintance; but always met a rebuff, or, on acquaintance, a disappointment; authors and their works are not always alike, more than parents and children. Now he had found this girl of genius and talent who would appreciate him, look up to him; it was the commencement of his social existence. He had something external to think of; he had found something to interest him beyond the reveries of his own drowsy yet still working brain.

“And this Mademoiselle 'Lena,” he said, as he walked along with the young grocer, “she is a very promising genius.”

“A promising genius! Pooh! we don't want genius! She is a very charming girl; a sweet, dear, good little creature.”

“She may make a good actress.”

“Actress! *parbleu!* are you mad, monsieur?—you mean a good wife! Yes, that she will. I love her, I have loved her all my life; and, despite her coquetry, I believe she loves me in her heart; but she never told me so. *Ciel!* what I would give to hear her say it! And I could make her happy too, keep her comfortable,—she should have done with her fairy-tale pictures for ever. Yes, I feel it, I know it, I could make 'Lena happy!”

“And she?” said the little old man, peering up his inquiring eyes into those of young Dupré, “and she, think you she could make you happy?”

“She? oh!” and the young grocer, stretching forth both his arms to their full extent, let them fall across his breast, pressing it with a fervid clasp for his sole response.

The acquaintance of the little old man and the young *enlumineuse* progressed rapidly. He was proud to reclaim his pupil, and believed her now to be his literary *protégée*; she, solitary and unprotected, was pleased with his harmless character and amused with his originality. He heard her recite, he wished to give her lessons in declamation after the manner of the ancients; but 'Lena was disappointed, he did not encourage her taste for the stage, and he mortified her vanity by doubting her talents for it. She had too much lightness of heart, perhaps too

much levity of mind, to listen to his reasonings. She began to weary of them, and sometimes she was out when he had climbed up the one hundred and forty steps. On such occasions there was fastened outside her door a little piece of paper bearing the words, *Elle est sortie*.

But one day the tired visitor perceived that the writing was not 'Lena's; he was too good a critic of that art not to see that it was in a bolder and better hand—a masculine hand; and stopping to examine it he heard voices in her room—they were acting a play, he heard it quite plain.

Monsieur Célestine retired, not a little displeased with the pretty *enlumineuse* for excluding him. He was too much offended to go to the sixth story very soon again; but he could not retain his resentment, 'Lena had become almost necessary to him. He left the thirtieth revision of his thirty manuscripts and went forth to see once more his interesting literary pupil. But the pretty *enlumineuse* was gone—actually gone; there was no *Elle est sortie* on the door; the words in great letters were, *à Louer*. Mademoiselle 'Lena had left her lodgings; no one could tell where she had gone. She was gone—*voilà tout*. Célestine naturally sought her at the house of Dupré fils; but the young grocer looked as sad as himself, and echoed his words,—

“What has become of Mademoiselle 'Lena?”

Weeks passed away, and that question remained unanswered. Célestine thought of the lively little girl as of a sunbeam that broke on his wintry day and caused its absence to be more felt by its brief presence. As for Dupré fils, he kept his thoughts to himself.

SCENE II.

A bright spring day had come. Oh, it was so bright, so redolent of youth and hope, and the promise of all good, it made even the heart of the little old man to sing for joy! He walked round the Château d'Eau, and surveyed the second-rate flower-market of Paris. All flowers of the season were there, and some which were made to blossom out of their season. He aspired only to a pot of violet; one was there; he demanded the price. Alas, it was a sou dearer and not a bit better than the violets on the Quai aux Fleurs!

“*Chose inentendue!*” cries the little man, in some indignation.

“Permit me to present it to you, monsieur,” says a sweet but rather conceited little voice, beside him.

He turned; there was 'Lena. She had just bought a budding rose-tree. He gazed; yes, it was her face, but not her dress,—not her simple air. The brown merino robe, the coquettish cap, the smart little apron, were changed for a more ambitious attire.

“Mademoiselle 'Lena!” cried the little old man, swinging his hat down to the ground, but raising his eyes to the fine ribands of her bonnet, and drawing them down to the delicately-clothed foot that peeped forth from her *robe à volant*.

“Monsieur,” replied 'Lena, inclining affectedly in return to his salutation.

“Mademoiselle, where are you?” cried the little old man.

“*Me voici*,” replied 'Lena, inclining again.

“*Mais enfin*, where, where do you lodge? It is no longer on the sixth story.”

“No, it is on the third,” said 'Lena, smiling with her usual archness; “one descends, you know, generally, in the world. But will you come and see where I am, since you cannot see me here?”

“Not see you! Ah, mademoiselle, mademoiselle, you make me a cruel reproach! But pardon me, how is one to know, to understand, since they have abolished faith in the fairies? You lodge on the third; you wear a bonnet, a handsome *robe à volants*, and you buy a budding rose-tree in the flower-market on the Boulevard, instead of a pot of violets on the Quai aux Fleurs!”

“All that is easily explained, my dear professor of writing,—pardon me, my dear Mr. Author,” 'Lena answered. “I am no longer *enlumineuse*; I am an actress. But will you carry my rose-tree, and come home with me as you did after our first flower-market rencontre?”

“Ah, willingly, with the greatest possible happiness!” cried the old man, with difficulty raising the flower-pot in his arms.

“It is too heavy, pray don't mind it,” said 'Lena.

“Mademoiselle, any burden borne in your service must be light,” was the reply.

'Lena smiled and walked on, the little old man hobbling beside her, and murmuring to himself, “Actress! actress!” But he could not get beyond that first idea implanted in his brain. 'Lena ushered him into a pretty apartment, consisting of two rooms,—one a small *salon*, furnished with some taste and a good deal of display.

“Is it possible?” asked Célestine, looking round as if awaking from a dream, before he

took the arm-chair she offered him. "An actress! Why, mademoiselle, it was only the other day you discovered your genius, and now to bring it before the public! I don't understand that. I have not published my first work yet, and it is more than thirty years since——"

"Since you discovered yours," 'Lena broke in. "Yes, that is probable; but, monsieur, some fruits gain flavour by keeping, and some turn to decay; your genius is of the first, mine of the latter order. I must use mine while it is fresh,—green, perhaps, they would call it; but yours may be kept till——"

An almost imperceptible lifting of her pretty shoulders finished a speech too saucy for the gravity of the little old man's comprehension.

"But, mademoiselle, in fact, where are you?—that is to say, where are you engaged, or do you but jest?"

"Nothing is more certain," said 'Lena; "and there is an *entrée* for you to my theatre this evening. I have actually made my *début*. I have been so fortunate as to meet with a patron,"—and the girl slightly coloured,— "one who encouraged my talent, who gave me his interest. I met him some time ago when I was showing the bookseller my illustrations. So, in short, I played at a private theatre with which that gentleman was connected; and then he got me an engagement with a manager; it is a very good one. I am the fashion now,—Mademoiselle de Lys, the pretty young *débutante*! You have seen me, without doubt, on the placards and hand-bills?"

"And *you* are Mademoiselle de Lys!" cried the old man, stupified with wonder.

'Lena curtsied.

"I was always fond of flowers, you know; so when I had to choose a name for my *début* I chose that. But come and see me act, I must go to a rehearsal now."

The old man descended the stairs.

"Precocious, precocious!" he murmured to himself; "if she had studied, thought, felt, before she acted! But she has genius, life, a pretty person, and youth. This will give temporary *éclat*, at least."

The doors of the theatre no sooner opened than old Célestine entered them and secured a good place; it was one of the small theatres of Paris. Mademoiselle de Lys appeared as a farmer's daughter. She was dressed with a charming simplicity which highly became

her; she was young, unsophisticated, and from the class of the people. They were more disposed to be pleased than to criticise; she looked so pretty, so fresh and piquante, with her native colour heightened by modesty and pleasure. Her faltering was thought delightful; her faults were imputed to timidity, and were applauded. Some harsher souls sent forth a few groans, but the applause prevailed. Poor Célestine, in spite of his prejudices, felt proud of his pupil; he had certainly given her lessons in writing, and he *thought* he had taught her elocution. When the curtain fell he hurried out to meet her. He saw her coming along the passage, looking the very representative of self-complacent happiness; her rosy cheeks more deeply blushing, her cherry lips opening with an elated smile. But 'Lena was not alone, and the little old man felt a pang in his very heart when he saw the face that leaned over her shoulder, and overheard the words of adulation whispered in her ear.

"That fine gentleman is her patron," he said to himself. "Poor 'Lena! poor child! she would be better without one!"

Mademoiselle de Lys started at the abrupt salutation of the shabbily-dressed old man who presented himself before her. Looking at her patron, she said,—

"This is Monsieur Célestine, the celebrated author."

Oh, how the last words tingled in the ears of the poor old man! for how many weary days did they repay him! "Célestine, the celebrated author!" He dreamed that they would be spoken after his death, but not in his life. 'Lena's conscience gave a twinge; she wished to make her poor friend great, lest his acquaintance should make her little, in the estimation of the finer man who attended her to the *fiacre* that was to convey her home. So she dropped back, and holding Célestine by his hand, desired him to come and congratulate her the next day at dinner.

That *tête-à-tête* dinner was delightful. 'Lena talked, laughed, danced, sung, and acted, for the sole benefit of the little old man; but more than this did she charm him by sitting patiently while he read more than a dozen pages of his manuscripts, not one word of which she comprehended. True, she was mentally rehearsing her part for her next appearance; it was one she had long desired to fill, and her patron had got it assigned to her. It was the principal character in the piece, that of a princess; her costume was to be brilliant.

Poor little 'Lena's head was nearly giddy. Her sager friend shook his ; in his opinion, the style of the farmer's daughter was more adapted to her than that of royalty. But Mademoiselle de Lys assumed her grand airs, gave him a card of *entrée*, and said, "*Nous verrons.*"

"And Monsieur Dupré," said Célestine, thinking, perhaps, of her patron, "is he never to have any part in the drama?—not even to act the Beast, though the Beauty plays hers so well?"

"Ah, that poor Dupré!" cried 'Lena, affectedly. "Here, you shall take him also an *entrée*; and you may tell him I shall make too good a princess to make a grocer's wife."

Célestine took the card, which, in fact, he had wished to get, and posted off to the young grocer.

"Well, my friend," said he, "have you heard of Mademoiselle de Lys?"

"The young actress who does not *rouge*?" said Dupré, rather gloomily. "Yes, I have heard of her ; but that does not interest me."

"No! Have you heard of Mademoiselle 'Lena?"

"'Lena! Speak—is—she—married?"

"Well, 'Lena is Mademoiselle de Lys. It is so, and there is a card of *entrée* to see her next Thursday. She sent it to you."

"What did she say?" asked Dupré, leaning against the drawers behind him, as if struck motionless with amazement.

"She said," replied the simple old man, "that I might tell you you would see she made too good a princess ever to make a grocer's wife."

Dupré held a large paper of coffee in his hands ; he sprung forward in an impulse of passion, and dashed it on the counter.

"Tell her, in return," he cried, "that so I fling from me every thought of an actress-wife ; tell her I despise her trade far more than she does mine!"

How long his speech or his message continued the astonished old man knew not, for the singular waste of coffee wholly absorbed him ; he busied himself in gathering into a paper the odoriferous grains which were scattered about.

"There, monsieur, there is your *entrée* ; and see, I have gathered up all this coffee."

"Throw both in the street," growled Dupré.

"*Parbleu!* the man is mad. Ah! true, he is in love. Strange thing love!—intellect disordered. Ah!" muttered old Célestine,

sweeping the brown berries into his paper. "I have an opinion, Monsieur Dupré—it may not be original, there is little originality in the world ; but I have an opinion that an author's style is greatly formed by the beverage on which he writes. I think all authors should drink coffee;" and the little old man, having swept in all the berries the paper would hold, folded it up, and, conveying it into his coat pocket, said,—"So you will not go to see Mademoiselle de Lys?"

"Mademoiselle de Fiddlestick!" cried the young grocer. "Yes, I will go that I may hiss her off the stage. Tell her so if she asks you."

The little old man gazed on Dupré as if he saw him at once transformed into a demon.

"Monsieur," he said, solemnly, "if you uttered one hiss for Mademoiselle 'Lena, the serpent's sting would be left in your breast for ever. Yes," he continued, with the earnestness that made him unconscious of speaking to any one but himself, "yes, to genius, condemnation is exquisite pain ; to an aspirant to fame, public reprobation is an incurable wound ; therefore it is wisdom to refrain from coming before that mighty censor, the public, until the tomb intervenes between us and its praise or blame ; when flattery cannot elate, or condemnation appal—then, yes then——" he went on in a lower voice, until sinking into the habits of his solitude he mumbled almost inwardly the concluding words,—"then is the time to publish!" and, so saying, he walked out of the grocer's shop, his thoughts again busy with his thirty manuscripts.

"And what did Monsieur Dupré say to you?" asked 'Lena, with some curiosity.

Célestine, who had a child-like habit of repeating facts just as they were, answered without hesitation,—

"He threw a great bag of coffee on the counter, and scattered it all about, and told me to tell you he would fling an actress-wife from him in like manner."

"Hah!" 'Lena ejaculated, and changed countenance. "Why will he go to see me, then, if he is so furious?" she demanded again. "Did he send no other message?"

"He told me to say he would go to hiss you off the stage, mademoiselle ; but that was a bad thought—it was anger—he will not."

'Lena turned very pale.

"Monsieur Célestine," she said, "is it true? was he so base, so mean, so spiteful? Ah!" she cried, dropping on a chair, "if

he were to hiss me! if he were to carry out his wicked thought!"

Célestine was sorry he had been so literal; he assured the young actress that her angry lover had only spoken in the first burst of vexation, and had already come to a better mind. He succeeded in calming her; and, waving her adieu, she left him with a restored countenance.

At an early hour on Thursday evening, Monsieur Célestine repaired by appointment to the house of the young grocer, in order to have a cup of his favourite beverage before going to the spectacle. While sipping some of the excellent *café noir* which he believed to be essential to authors, and gravely propounding his opinion as to its effects on the style of their writings, Dupré stood before him with his large eyes fastened on his face, as if intently listening to his dreamy discourse, but suddenly stretching forth his hands, he laid them on the old man's shoulders, causing him to lean backwards, until his whole attention was roused, and his face directed fully to the agitated one of his young host.

"Monsieur Célestine," said Dupré, "you know 'Lena—have you influence with her?"

"Ye—es—yes, undoubtedly yes," he answered, gaining conviction of the fact as he spoke. "But, Monsieur Dupré, it is only the influence which mind can possess over mind; only the influence which mature genius can have over immature, that is all, monsieur. She listens to my manuscripts with great delight and benefit. I never read them to any one else now, for it is only after death——"

"Monsieur Célestine," cried Dupré, in a voice that terrified the little old man, who began to fear he had grown jealous, "if you have influence with that girl, save her!" and he released the old man's shoulders with a jerk that nearly upset him.

"You think, then," he said, hesitating, "you perhaps think that she has mistaken her vocation?"

"Vocation! yes, if you will, she has mistaken it. Her vocation is in my house—in my heart; her vocation is to make others happy, to be happy; to die on the bosom of love, or to weep happy tears over the cold heart that loved her; the vocation of her loving heart is to be the centre of a fond circle who will call her wife, mother, friend, or mistress; not to be the poor mercenary puppet of an exhibition; not to be a creature

admired, followed, and flattered for a month or a year, and left to die neglected and forgotten."

Poor Célestine was much struck by this burst of feeling; and his ever-working mind rapidly followed out the ideas Dupré's speech presented.

"My friend," he said, "I believe, now, that Mademoiselle 'Lena would be happier as a grocer's wife than she ever will be in her career of Princess."

"Bravo! bravo!" cried Dupré, with a kindling countenance. "Now you speak like a man of sense. Keep to that, now; use your influence with her; get her off the stage; teach her to see her true vocation; then—no matter, you shall write on coffee all the days of your life, at all events."

"Monsieur Dupré," answered Célestine, "I have seen the snares that must beset a girl of genius in such a career as she has chosen. I will do your wish, I will try to save her; not for the sake of the coffee you promise—although I consider it a public duty for authors to drink coffee—but because I love her as my child."

They were in good time at the theatre, and got a front seat *parterre*. Dupré never spoke; the little old man soliloquised till the curtain rose and discovered the Princess sitting in state. Then the young grocer took one long gaze at his former simple love. Under other circumstances the scene might have afforded him a hearty laugh. The assumption of regal state by 'Lena Marbout reminded him of the mock dignity of early days, when they played at kings and queens together. But he was close enough to the stage to see plainly the pretty, coquettish, but every-day features, which had so long been mingled with his household dreams, which had presented themselves before him in all the arrangements of his little *ménage*—when he fancied he saw the little *retroussé* nose looking more *retroussé* at some of his bachelor proceedings, and the pretty smiling mouth smiling more complacently at others; a sigh or groan burst from his very heart as he saw all these household visions end in the scene before him; the Princess was forgotten—his lost love filled his thoughts.

Old Célestine was differently employed; the Princess alone occupied him.

"Bah! bah!" he murmured to himself, "how badly she walks! ah, how her arms fall! what a want of dignity in her gestures! how awkwardly she turns! her long train will

get under her feet! *Chut!* she is caught in it! Eh! there she stands with it wrapt round her feet just like a cat in her tail! *Parbleu!* she can't move! bah! they hiss; she can't run to meet her lover! Oh, 'Lena! oh, Mademoiselle de Lys! bah! they hiss again. See, see, her lover has to disentangle her! Savages, how they groan!"

Hisses and groans, indeed, became vociferous. Dupré had never looked up at the Princess since he first recognised 'Lena Marbout; that noise aroused him. He beheld the unfortunate Princess full before him, her long train exactly describing the circle of the cat's tail about her feet; but the unexpected storm of hisses deprived her of energy and thought; she stood there, her arms straight down by her sides, her eyes fixed, in a trembling and imploring gaze, upon the audience, and, as Dupré thought, more especially upon himself. He started up at what he considered her appeal; he never thought of answering disapprobation with applause; had he clapped, the terrified actress would have seen him, and might have taken courage; but he turned to the audience, clenched his hands, and shook them, with a display of glittering teeth, at the pit, the boxes, and gallery, as if defying to mortal combat the whole armament of hisses, whose clamour, in spite of the threatening teeth and hands, increased in volume, until when the hero of the piece unwound the twining train from the feet of the Princess, walking round and round her with it raised in his hand, the uproar became immense; the royal lady, with a look of anguish extended her rosy arms, and clasped her hands; the young grocer, boiling with rage, turned and did the same.

"*A moi, 'Lena!*" he cried aloud; "*à moi!*" but the curtain dropped as he uttered the words, and hid Mademoiselle de Lys from the public for ever.

"She is lost!" cried the little old man, in a tone of despair.

"She is saved!" said Dupré, in one of emotion, but yet of joy. "*Dieu merci! Dieu merci!* they shall see her no more, all those horrid eyes. Blessed curtain! I shall love you for ever."

"Poor 'Lena! poor child!" murmured Célestine, "she cannot survive. No; genius unrecognised by the world, rebuked by the multitude, must hide its head and die; therefore it is better that the tomb should stand between us and our fame—that our works should not be known till —"

"We will meet her as she comes out," said Dupré. "Now is the time to try your influence; we will go home with her; she will be softened now. She will feel she has mistaken her vocation; we will convince her she will make a better grocer's wife than a princess."

They went round to the door by which the luckless actress must come out. They had hardly taken a place beside the pillar, when a private *calèche* drew up to the door, and the next instant Mademoiselle de Lys appeared, leaning on her patron's arm, her head bowed down and almost resting on it. He put his arm round her waist as if to support her drooping figure. Dupré darted forward, and caught her other hand. 'Lena looked up at him, shuddered, and, with a repulsive movement snatching away her hand, cried, in a tone of more anger than seemed compatible with her nearly fainting state,—

"Serpent! have you not already hissed forth your venom to your satisfaction?"

Stupified, Dupré stood rooted to the spot; the step was thrown up,—'Lena and her patron had driven off before either the young grocer or the old man could begin to think what all this was about.

"I know what it is," said Célestine then; "she thought you incited all this uproar against her, because you know you said you would hiss her off the stage."

"And did you tell her so?" said Dupré, turning fiercely to him.

"You told me to do so," the old man answered. "But be easy, we will tell her the truth to-morrow."

"She is not worth the trouble she gives me," said Dupré, now seriously offended, and the more angry at 'Lena because he felt he had been wrong himself, and thought she had cause to be displeased with him. "Any man but myself would have given her up long ago. But was there not some one with her to-night? I saw no one but her, yet I think some one led her out."

"It was her patron," replied Célestine; "he got into the carriage with her."

"Her patron! Ah!" And Dupré mused with a gloomy countenance. "Well, Monsieur Célestine, we will go and see 'Lena in the morning; you know I did not hiss."

"Oh, I know it!"

And they supped together, and parted to meet in the morning.

In the morning they met. They went to the house, Boulevard St. Martin, and rang

the bell; the door as usual opened invisibly. The third story was reached, and the bell of 'Lena's apartment rung. There was no answer, and no one appeared. At last there came down the old woman who had the charge of the whole house. Célestine asked for Mademoiselle de Lys, for Dupré would not use the name, and that of 'Lena was not known. The old woman had applied a key to the lock before they spoke.

"I thought you wanted the apartment," she said. "Mademoiselle de Lys has given it up."

As she spoke the door opened. It was empty of all living things.

"Where is she gone?" demanded Dupré.

"How can I tell, monsieur? She sent and paid her rent up early this morning, though it is not due for more than a month to come."

"Tell me where she is gone?" Dupré repeated more loudly.

"Monsieur seems to think it possible to know where all the actresses in Paris go to," replied the old woman, looking at Célestine, as if she thought he must be more reasonable. "Perhaps she is gone to the provinces; perhaps she is gone to a more modest lodging,—she failed last night, they say; perhaps she has got a protector."

Dupré almost knocked the old woman down, and rushed out of the *salon* into the *chambre à coucher*, thinking 'Lena might be concealed there; it, too, was empty. Célestine poked about on the mantelpiece and chiffonnier in search of a card of address, but there was none; nor could any further tidings be learned of Mademoiselle de Lys than that she had paid up her rent and given up her lodgings.

Their inquiries after 'Lena Marbout were as unsuccessful. Neither the one nor the other were to be found or heard of.

SCENE THE LAST.

The flower-market on the Place de la Madeleine was as brilliant as the flower-market of the Madeleine ought to be. Camelias, myrtles, oranges, expanded their delicate or fragrant blossoms; and between the lovely ranks marched our little old man, his hands joined behind his back, his stick held across it, his head moving from side to side, like an admirer amid the beauties of a ball-room, uncertain where to give his preference. The truth was the little old man was afraid to make advances, for common flowers on the Place de la Madeleine were as rare as com-

mon people, and dear in proportion. His violet was quite gone, and he speculated on replacing it with a pot of mignonette. A smart *calèche* drove up to the entrance of the flower-market; an over-dressed young lady was handed out by an equally over-dressed footman, who, with a bâton in his hand, followed her steps down the alley of flowers. She bought a superb white camelia, on which the poor little man had cast many a glance of admiration, while like a humble lover true to a humbler love, he looked more tenderly at the modest violet beneath it.

The lady bent over the flowers; the plumes of her white bonnet hung forward, and, with her long drooping curls, concealed her features; but her cheeks were pale, her eyes were dull; and it was not until he heard her voice that the little old man, with a cry of surprise, exclaimed,—

"'Lena! Mademoiselle de Lys! *C'est bien vous? N'est-ce pas?*"

'Lena trembled, grew a little paler, but yet looked glad.

"Ah," she said, "we are fated to meet in the flower markets!"

An appropriate compliment this time failed the little old man; the violet, the budding rose, the white camelia,—all emblems failed him; or 'Lena, was it that she failed to present to his honest mind a corresponding image?

"You have come to buy your modest pot of violet, my dear professor; is it not so?" she said. But the arch pleasantry of her address on the Quai aux Fleurs was gone.

"Yes, mademoiselle, — or — or — madame," said the old man, bowing with a constrained air, for he felt as if "Mademoiselle" were no longer 'Lena's title; "yes, I am constant to my violet, but there can be no longer opposition between us. It is not always that one descends in the world, as you once said. You, on the contrary, rise too high for your friends to follow."

'Lena looked surprised at the bitterness of the old man's tone; but as she looked in his face her eyes became suffused with tears.

"My dear professor," she said, forcing a smile, that glittered like a rainbow in the overcast sky, "you are angry with me; but — Well, perhaps, we both have cause for complaint; will you be friends with me?"

She held out her hand; the old man caught it, and pressed the tips of her delicate gloves with his lips.

"Let me carry your beautiful camelia,"

he cried, "as I carried your pot of violets, and your budding rose."

And with bent knees and bent back the little old man essayed to lift the heavy pot. 'Lena made a sign to the footman, who raised the flower and transported it to the carriage.

"Now, monsieur, the will stands accepted for the deed; so enter and come home with me, as you did on the former occasions. But will you—can you?" 'Lena added, with an almost beseeching air.

"Mademoiselle," said the old man, "I believe it my duty to follow you wherever you are." He was thinking of his promise to Monsieur Dupré.

'Lena followed her camelia to the carriage, made the poor old man enter it with her, though she seemed somewhat to deprecate the saucy regards of the two attendants, and drove to a rather stylish mansion. She went upstairs, followed still by the finely-equipped footman, whom Monsieur Célestine, holding his hat in his hand, made pass before him. While she directed him how to place the flower Célestine stood in the door-way, his head thrown back, his eyes—and, indeed, his mouth too—rather widely opened, his dust-engrained hat held down at the very tip of the rim and full extension of the arm, and his head moving like that of a mandarin, as he surveyed the bright and handsome *salon*.

"*Où sommes-nous?*" he soliloquised; "*enfin, où sommes-nous?*" Mademoiselle 'Lena, the pretty illuminator of *Blue Beard* and *Tom Thumb*, lodging on the sixth, and buying a simple violet; then Mademoiselle de Lys, actress, buying a budding rose-tree, and living on the third; and now—ah, descending always!—we are on the first, in a splendid *salon*, and buying a superb camelia; but *who are we now?*"

Alas, a good grocer's wife and great packets of coffee faded from the poor old man's vision as he asked the question!

The footman had now placed the camelia, and turned his back on the lady with an un-repressed sneer; he passed the old man, who was forced to move out of the door-way, surveying him from head to foot with a disdain which words could not have uttered.

"Ah!" said Célestine to himself, "that grand gentleman does not respect her; but he does not respect me either—such is the fate Genius meets from the vulgar."

"Now, my good professor," said 'Lena, with a tone and manner quite unlike that of the pretty *enlumineuse*, "take that *fauteuil*."

She pointed to an easy chair of a most luxurious description. The little old man sat down, and was absorbed in it. He half arose, moved to the edge, and looked behind him at its back. "Marvellous!" he ejaculated, and sank into it with such a sensation of bodily, animal, and mental enjoyment as he had never felt in the course of his three score years. Oh, with coffee and that arm-chair what glorious things might not be written!—how easy would be the flow of ideas! But when was Genius born to luxury? His thoughts reverted to his harsh rush-bottomed chair, his ink-stained table "ah, well! after death these will be memorable, precious!" A hearty laugh dissipated the dreamy soliloquies to which his solitary habits accustomed him. It was 'Lena, the pretty *enlumineuse*, who laughed then—it was not Mademoiselle de Lys the actress, neither was it the great unknown of that handsome *salon*.

"Ah, 'Lena! Mademoiselle 'Lena!" cried the little old man, "I have found you again."

The meaning of his voice and words checked her gaiety.

"It is so long since I laughed like that," she said, putting her cambric handkerchief to her eyes; "but to see you and that easy chair making acquaintance was quite a scene."

"You do not, then, often laugh now?" said old Célestine.

"I have no one to laugh with, no one to laugh at," she replied. "No cause for laughter now."

"Mademoiselle, or madame, for I know not which to call you," said Célestine, "tell me, are you married?"

"No," 'Lena replied, lifting her eyes to his.

"Alas!" said the old man with a deep sigh.

"Why do you sigh so mournfully?" she asked; "you sigh for me—why?"

"Because, mademoiselle, because I knew your mother; because I knew you when you bought the pot of violets on the Quai aux Fleurs, and illustrated *Beauty and the Beast* on the sixth story."

'Lena sank back on the handsome couch she sat on; the tears that started to her eyes could not be stopped, they rolled down her cheeks.

"'Lena, 'Lena," cried the old man, "tell me truly, are you happy?"

"Happy! oh, no! I once was happy—when we met on the Quai aux Fleurs."

"Poor child, poor child!" said the old man, seating himself beside her, and taking her hand in his. "'Lena, there is mercy with God more than with men; though you have

erred and strayed from the right way, return, my child, return to Him; for his dear Son's sake He will open His arms of love, and shield you from sin and suffering for ever. Oh!" he continued, while she wept on, "I foresaw this when you first spoke to me of your *penchant* for the stage. I knew the pretty orphan, the unprotected child, could not sustain its temptations, its many dangers."

"My friend, my friend!" Lena interrupted, pressing his hand almost convulsively in hers, "you go too far—you conclude I am fallen, lost, guilty; except in thought, except in irresolution of purpose, I have not sinned in the way you imagine. But will you listen to what I have to tell since we last met? Oh, Monsieur Célestine, it is very sweet to have a friend to tell all this to; yet there is very little to tell."

"Speak, tell me all," said Célestine, whose handkerchief had been stanching the drops from his eyes.

"You ask me if I am happy," said Lena. "No, I am not. Can I be so when every friend is gone from me, when I am alone with a cold and sullen stateliness with which a heart like mine, I now find, can have no fellowship? Alas! I aspired to grandeur, I longed to be a great lady. Well, I have all that is fine about me, and I am miserable."

"You do not care to act the Princess any longer?" said Célestine, in a caressing tone. Lena shook her head.

"Monsieur," she said with gravity, "from that fatal night my ambition was at an end."

"Then why," cried the old man, glancing round the room—"why are you here? why are you so grand?"

"Ah! that is what I have to tell you. You see, monsieur, that fatal night I left the theatre heart-broken, plunged in an abyss of grief and shame. Oh! those horrid faces, those glaring eyes all round the house, those grinning teeth, and venomous hisses—ah! I see them, I feel them still! And he, too, he who so long pursued me with his love, who so long tried to kindle mine,—I saw him gesticulating to the mob he had brought there. I saw him resolved to crush me; and when I came forth overwhelmed, dead with shame and despair, he was there to triumph over me."

"Dupré?" cried Célestine; but he stopped short.

"Yes, Dupré! I resolved, then, that he should never triumph again, that he should never hear more of me. But hear all that

passed and then advise me,—tell me what I ought to do. My patron was always there; it was he who procured me the engagement, it was he who got me to undertake the part of the Princess. When the curtain fell so suddenly he was at my side; he took me away and put me into his own carriage. I cared not where I was, nor where I went; but somehow he soothed me—it was balm to hear words of praise, to know my talents were still appreciated, though my success on the stage was hopeless. I would have clung to any friend at such a moment; and when, without actually speaking of love, I felt his tenderness, and believed in his affection, I thought of nothing, feared nothing, cared for nothing in the world, but to get into an asylum and be hidden from public gaze. I was faint too, and stupefied with grief; we had got into this house before I was aware we were not going to my own lodging. I must confess all, monsieur; I believe my head had laid upon his arm in the carriage, I believe he almost carried me into the house; surely the spirit of my pious mother watched round her child and saved me."

"Saved her?" Célestine ejaculated, almost gasping.

"Yes, saved her as yet. I did not think or care to save myself. I was abandoned to despair. But as we mounted the stairs monsieur's valet came running down, saying, with an air of excitement, that he had been on the point of starting to the theatre in search of his master. Three gentlemen, with whom he was associated in an important speculation in Algeria, had come to the house to bring him tidings of an affair which demanded his immediate presence; they were all to set out together by the *malle-poste*. My patron left me in a chamber and went to them directly; his valet had orders to pack his portmanteau. He only returned to me to bid me adieu; he told me that my engagement at the theatre was at an end, that I must not demand my salary, that I would be ruined in every way if I did not accept the asylum of his house, which he would leave me to take charge of. He added that he had sent his man to pay my rent, and remove my effects from my lodgings; that no one would disturb me here, but I must promise him not to depart before his return to France. I promised, and he left me. When he was gone I found all was at my orders, and what I did not order was brought; the *modiste* came with robes, and bonnets, and shawls, and I

had nothing to do, and took a pleasure in dressing myself and acting the great lady. But at last I began to tire of this, and better thoughts came back; I recollected the happy times when I used to work for my daily bread. I felt that my vanity and love of applause had led me into a great deal of trouble, that my levity had cost me the love of my best friends. I was unhappy, and I wrote to my patron. I wanted to know his purposes; he had given me hints that made me think he wished to make me his wife on his return. I wrote to him—there, Monsieur Célestine, is his answer.”

Célestine, putting on his spectacles, perused the letter, while 'Lena, with glowing cheeks and tearful eyes, sat beside him. It was just such a letter as might be expected. 'Lena was to have money, servants, dress, pleasures, everything but the name of wife; but her patron having an objection to matrimony, that subject was never to be hinted at again. The writer concluded with a hope that the pretty little actress would make herself happy till his return, which would be in a few days.

“And now, mademoiselle,” said the old man, carefully folding the letter and placing it on his knee,—“and now what will you do?”

“Ah, my friend, tell me!”

“'Lena, do you love this man?” asked Célestine, rather sternly, tapping the letter.

“Oh, no! Perhaps that fatal evening, in my misery, I might have fancied so. But, no; my ambition, my vanity might have ended in still worse shame and degradation, but I should not have had the excuse of love. It was because poor Dupré forsook, cast me off, insulted me!”

“'Lena, you have been very foolish!”

“Oh, yes! and very culpable. But I was cast off by every one; I had neither friend, nor money, nor trade remaining.”

“You loved Monsieur Dupré, 'Lena, yet you would not listen to him.”

“Because my vanity was stronger than my love,” said 'Lena, candidly, “and I thought I had him in chains too strong to be easily burst. Ah, it was only when you told me he had cast me off, that the love grew stronger than the vanity.”

The old man's face brightened.

“You have been very wrong, 'Lena.”

“Yes, you repeat that; every one will repeat it. When a woman even appears to fall, there is no help for her. There is no resource for me. I may as well be worse, since no one will care if I am better.”

“'Lena, there is One who trieth the hearts,

as well as seeth the ways. Child, will you speak so, when you know God judgeth not as man judgeth?”

“'Lena caught the old man's hand; her warm tears fell fast as she bowed her head with an air of penitence and sorrow.

“You have sinned,” he continued; “but still you are virtuous, and your heart as yet uncorrupted. Rise, then, to the paths of virtue and peace, and forsake those that lead to error and misery. Will you leave this house?”

“I would gladly; but what am I to do? Where am I to go?”

“Do! ask charity from door to door. Go! go out under the canopy of heaven, and let God's peace and blessing descend from thence upon you!”

'Lena threw her arms around the old man's neck, pressed her lips on his calm forehead. and, crying out, “*Attendez, attendez!*” ran out of the room.

Not many minutes had passed when she reappeared, transformed once more to 'Lena Marbout. The fine silk robe, the cashmere shawl, the plumed bonnet, were changed for the plain merino dress, the smart little apron, the tiny cap; her flowing ringlets were gathered into their former rich and glossy braids; she stood before the old man, and made him a rustic salutation in the style of the farmer's daughter.

“Excellent! excellent!” cried the delighted old man. “My dear little girl, my sweet child is herself again! Then you will come! you will leave this grand house! We will act Beauty and the Beast all through now.”

'Lena sighed at this.

“I will go,” she said. “But when? I promised my patron not to leave it until his return.”

Célestine looked puzzled.

“If you stay, you are not in safety, 'Lena.”

“Oh, yes!” she replied. “I have put off his fine clothes and will never put them on; I have left them all ready; I am wiser now than I was.”

“It is a point of honour,” said the old man, “difficult to determine, for your promise was wrong;” and, he turned to the window to reflect more fully on the question.

“What is here, mademoiselle?” he cried.

“A post carriage has just stopped at the door!”

'Lena flew to the window.

“It is he! it is he! save yourself!” she exclaimed, pushing the old man to the door.

“Mademoiselle,” said the little man, planting his feet firmly one in advance of the other,

with his stick horizontally presented as if to poniard the new-comer; "I will not save myself without you! I had just resolved never to leave this house till you left it also!"

"Sainte Marie!" cried 'Lena, seizing him by the coat and dragging him over the floor; "he is coming! he will kill you for this! Ah, he will throw you out of the window! Quick! this way—this way!"

She opened a side-door leading into one of those passages common in French houses which conduct to a private staircase and an entrance into some by-street, generally at the side or back of the house; but, as she pushed the little old man through it, he grasped her firmly in his arms, and Mademoiselle 'Lena and the little old man nearly rolled down the stairs and into the street beyond them.

"Now," he said, drawing his breath—"now take my arm, and we will run. Don't be afraid; you are saved. I would have died rather than left you. We are designed to be the protectors of the feebler sex."

'Lena trembling, half laughing and half crying, was now ready to laugh altogether, as, putting her arm through that of the little old man, she hurried him along, supporting rather than being supported.

"And now," said the little old man, as he unlocked the door of his small chamber—"now we are safe; and I think, mademoiselle, I had better fasten the doors and windows while I go to see if I can get you another chamber in this house, or else when I return I may find the lodging is empty again."

"No, no, my good friend," said the poor girl, sitting down on the identical box which held the thirty manuscripts, "I have had enough of wanderings, enough of changes; I am too glad to see the face of the only friend I have in the world."

"Pardon me, mademoiselle, I have a rival. Let me tell you, Monsieur Dupré never cast you off; he never hissed you; on the contrary, he shook his hands at the audience, and would have fought the whole assembly, if it were possible. Your poor Beast is dying for his Beauty, mademoiselle; but perhaps you will not care to turn him into a prince now."

'Lena heard this with surprise.

"It was the power of love," she replied, "you once said effected that transformation. Alas! my love is unworthy now of him who once sought it."

Célestine withdrew, and the sun had nearly

retired from the dull little chamber before the door again opened. Its solitary inmate was still sitting on the box, her arms resting on her lap, and the joined hands supporting her chin. Dupré stood before her. She gazed into his countenance with anxiety; but read there the unconquered love which had endured her faults, follies, and levity. She threw herself into the arms that opened to receive her.

The little old man, who was behind the young grocer, capered about the room in an ecstasy of enjoyment; and, finding no way of expressing it while his guests were occupied with each other, he ran for a jug of water, and poured it over his withered violet, either to express his love, or as a *souvenir* of his first meeting with the young *enlumineuse*.

"What can I ever do for you?" said 'Lena, turning to him at last, as she at once wiped away her tears and hid her blushes.

"Marry me as quickly as you can, dear 'Lena," said Dupré, answering for the little old man. "That is what Monsieur Célestine would tell you. Is it not, my good friend?" and he threw him a look which precluded any but an assenting reply.

"It is, it is!" cried Célestine, rubbing his hands with great rapidity. "Mademoiselle must now be placed in safe keeping. My rôle is played; the three scenes are acted. You see, my dear child, each scene of our drama has opened in a flower-market; and as there are no more flower-markets in Paris, we must let the curtain drop."

"Ah!" said Mademoiselle 'Lena, casting up her bright dewy eyes, "the Three Flower-Markets of Paris will be a moral teaching for me. I shall always love the violet, and dread the rose and the camelia."

"Then I will cherish the rose and camelia," said her lover, "since they teach my 'Lena to be a good grocer's wife."

Must we not add that the little old man, after he had given away Mademoiselle 'Lena at the altar, lived happily all the rest of his days, and wrote on coffee *ad libitum*? But his genius appeared to take a turn after that event, and his solitary chamber was nearly deserted for the young grocer's lively house. 'Lena and her husband were beside him when he died there; but his thirty manuscripts were found in the box in his chamber duly prepared for going to press after his death. Whether they ever went there, still remains a question for literary research.

Trollope, Frances Milton,

Petticoat government a novel

Paris 1850

P.o.angl. 450 m-13

urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10750724-5